

The Operations of International Oil Corporation and Women's Livelihood Challenges in Ogulagha Island of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate on how women's livelihoods in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria, are impacted by the actions of international oil corporations (IOCs). This study employed a cross-sectional survey research approach. The two main methods for gathering data were administering a questionnaire and conducting interviews. The information was analysed using descriptive statistics. According to the percentage summary of respondents, the operations of IOCs in the study area have caused the following challenges to the women's livelihood: environmental degradation (100.0%), loss of arable lands (100.0%), and water pollution (100.0%), followed by health problems (92.6%), and loss of sources of income (82.1%). According to these findings, the major challenge they face as a result of IOC operations in the study area is environmental degradation, loss of arable lands, and water pollution. The study recommended that the IOCs and government bodies use more pleasant and refined tactics in their operations, as well as the current, less hazardous apparatus. There is also a need for consistent and appropriate environmental cleaning exercises so that the livelihood of the women in the area can be restored.

Keywords: *Development, International Economic Relations, International Oil Corporations, International Relations, Niger Delta, Nigeria, Women's Livelihood.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The discovery of crude oil in Nigeria has worsened the dilemma of the "resource curse hypothesis," which contends that there is an inverse relationship between natural resource availability and economic growth. The scenario described by this concept involves a territory that is abundant in natural resources but, paradoxically, does not have the economic and social development that should be associated with such a place (Amundsen, 2014). Nigeria started producing oil when Shell Petroleum Development Company started conducting commercial crude oil extraction at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta, producing roughly 5,100 barrels per day (BPD) (Odupitan, 2017, Ibietan, Abasilim & Olobio, 2018, Udoh, Folarin & Isumonah, 2020). The Niger Delta area is

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made up of nine states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. It occupies 12% of Nigeria's total land area and is located in the southern part of the country. It is about 112,100 square kilometres in size.

The discovery and extraction of oil in the Niger Delta have severely harmed the ecosystem and resulted in community uprooting, loss of livelihoods, unimaginable suffering, and extreme poverty for the whole Niger Delta population, particularly women. Major catastrophes have occurred as a result of oil spills and gas flares in communities. Spills do occur infrequently, but flares are always present. The nation's "backbone," the petroleum sector, is responsible for all of Nigeria's on-land and offshore oil and gas production. Over 80% of all government revenue and more than 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange gains come from it (Ololo, Onyedikachi & Allens, 2020). The Niger Delta now has 606 oil fields, 355 of which are on land and the remaining 251 are offshore. 193 of them are still in use today, while 23 have been shut down or abandoned because of poor visibility or a well that has completely dried up (Chukwuemeka, et al., 2017).

Nigeria's economy is strongly reliant on oil profits, which account for 20% of GDP, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and 65% of budgetary revenues (Adedokun, 2018). Despite the Niger Delta's wealth and underdeveloped state, the bulk of its residents live in poverty. In the region, there is "administrative neglect, deteriorating social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, extreme poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict," according to a UNDP report. Gberevbie, Ibietan, Abasilim & Excellence-Oluye (2014), as well as Duru (2014). Despite the substantial sums of money generated by oil exploration, exploitation, and sales, the research asserts that the majority of people in the Niger Delta do not have enough access to clean water, health care, power, and other essentials or social infrastructures.

Due to the extent of poverty and underdevelopment there as well as the money generated by crude oil extraction, as was previously indicated, the region serves as one of the world's most striking and unpleasant examples of the "resource curse" theory (Duruji & Dibia, 2017, Olu-Owolabi, Amoo, Samuel, Oyeyemi & Adejumo, 2020). The livelihoods of communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta are complicated and dynamic. The term "livelihood" refers to the activities, access to, and resources (natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital) that collectively determine anyone's or a household's level of living. Institutions and social ties act as intermediaries for these resources (Rhiney, 2017). A manner of life also requires these skills, resources (both monetary and social), and pursuits (Tolkach & King, 2015). A sustainable way of life can tolerate stresses and shocks, recover from them, and retain or increase its capacities and resources both now and in the future without jeopardising the natural resource base (Tolkach & King, 2015).

Rural women face difficulties due to environmental pollution and seasonal patterns in resource use, which results in unstable livelihoods (Kafumbata, et al., 2014). This is because women typically provide the majority of the household income in the Niger Delta. As a result of ongoing oil spills and gas flaring, IOC operations harm the environment in the Niger Delta. Oil spills cause pollution of fisheries, waterways, groundwater, farmlands, and air, while gas flares cause biodiversity loss, fish stock depletion, deforestation, acid rain, biodiversity loss, carbon dioxide and methane emissions (Albert, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2018). As a result of IOC operations, women started organizing demonstrations and campaigns in 1984 to demand a cleaner, safer environment free of pollution and its effects on their livelihoods (Obi, 2014).

Women in the Niger Delta organised large-scale community rallies against the presence of international oil firms there. This protest was sparked by the 1984 Ogharefe women's demonstration against the US Pan Ocean (Obi, 2014). In order to improve and sustain their economic, environmental, and social conditions, each of the women's protests had the same objectives and demanded the same things of the government and oil firms (Ihayere, et al., 2014). In order to survive and maintain their way of life, they effectively

requested the supply of social amenities including adequate roads, water, healthcare facilities, and power. In addition, they called for political, social, and economic empowerment (Ihayere et al., 2014). Ihayere (2014) asserts that 47 Warri women organised and campaigned against oil firms between 1984 and 1986, particularly those from the Burutu Local Government Area, which encompasses Ogulagha Island.

They demanded that the corporations pay them back for the seized lands and the environmental damage (Adeboboye, 2013). The same protest and siege scenario occurred once more in 1999, but this time it was directed at Shell Development Company (SPDC). The Ijaw and Itsekiri communities spearheaded the region's most notable 10-day women's uprising against Chevron in 2002 (Brisibe, 2015). The women threatened to go naked if their demands weren't met, which would have been the most obvious and effective way to get their point across but would have been unthinkable in the West. At the same time, Ilaje women interfered with business at SPDC's operational headquarters (Torulagha, 2017). The Niger Delta region's women and girls face unique health risks that have been linked to increased rates of miscarriage and maternal and infant mortality. The women's demands focused on the need to improve these women's living conditions and reduce these risks.

Other problems that were raised were the provision of scholarships for girls' formal and informal education as well as the socioeconomic and political emancipation of women to make them economically independent and productive (Wilson, 2014). The majority of the women's complaints during these demonstrations revealed that they disapproved of the IOCs' commitment to improving the lives of indigenous peoples in the Niger Delta regions through compensation practises, particularly those pertaining to women's livelihood (Ekhaton, 2014). The lives of women employed in surrounding businesses including farming and fishing were more adversely affected by the activities of this IOC (Amusan & Olutola, 2017). The concerns and challenges faced by women in the area, particularly the effects on their livelihood, served as the impetus for this study. In line with the foregoing, this study investigates how the activities of foreign oil companies (IOCs) impact the standard of living for women in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Oil Corporations

Upstream, midstream, and downstream are the three divisions of the oil and gas business. The upstream part comprises looking for natural gas or crude oil fields that are underground and under water, as well as drilling exploratory wells and drilling into existing wells to retrieve oil and gas (Shukla & Karki, 2016). Transportation, storing, and refining of oil and gas are all included in midstream. Once resources have been recovered, they are transported to a refinery, which is typically situated far away from oil and gas reserves. Transport is exemplified by tankers, pipelines, and fleets of vehicles (Davies & Luman, 2015). In the downstream field, the raw materials that were gathered during the upstream phase are sorted. This includes cleaning up natural gas and refining crude oil. Advertised and disseminated to customers and end users in a number of ways are natural gas, diesel oil, petrol, gasoline, lubricants, kerosene, jet fuel, asphalt, heating oil, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and a range of other petrochemical kinds.

The oil and gas industry are made up of a diverse range of companies, including multinational corporations (MNCs), transnational corporations (TNCs), international oil corporations (IOCs), and national oil corporations (NOCs) (Rotimi & Abdul-Azeez, 2013). There is disagreement over the concept and position of these types of oil companies. Transnational corporations (TNCs) are known by a variety of names, including direct investment, international business, international business, international corporate group, multinational family group, global business, ultra-national corporations,

and so on (Nwoke, 2021). Although all other types of oil corporations are clarified, this study focuses on the operations of International Oil Corporations (IOCs).

2.2 The Concept of International Oil Corporations (IOCs)

International oil titans and major oil companies, as International Oil Corporations (IOCs) are sometimes referred to, coexist with large national oil companies and emerging-market firms that play an increasingly important role on the global stage. International Oil Corporations (IOCs) are vertically integrated companies that operate across the entire oil and gas value chain on a global scale. In terms of revenue, they are one of the world's largest corporations (Dennison, 2020). The business operations of IOCs typically span the entire process, from discovery to production, transportation, and processing, and finally to refined product marketing and sales. Because of their broad business scope and expanded operations, some IOCs are also known as integrated oil companies. Examples include ExxonMobil, Shell, Total, BP, and Chevron (Zabbey, Sam, & Onyebuchi, 2017). According to Cahen-Fourot et al. (2020), these five biggest IOCs, sometimes referred to as international majors or mega majors, controlled 17% of the world's oil market in 2018. Asset value, sales, revenue, and return on capital invested are the four primary indicators used in Platts' annual survey of international energy businesses in 2018 to analyse their financial performance (Cahen-Fourot, et al., 2020).

Business operations at all levels of the supply chain are necessary for vertical integration. Vertically integrated companies, for instance, serve both upstream and downstream markets in the oil sector. Increased horizontal consolidation has led to vertical integration. Global majors or IOCs have benefited from several mergers and acquisitions as they have expanded their global business from exploration to trade. Texaco and Chevron amalgamated, Exxon merged with Shell, Amoco and Arco merged with BP. The main issues for IOC business models are market access, risk aversion, teamwork, and more cost-effective use of staff (Nwozor, Audu & Adama, 2018). There are now five major oil corporations active in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. One such is Royal Dutch/Shell, an Anglo-Dutch business created by the union of Shell and Royal Dutch. Exxon Mobil, an American company created by the combination of Exxon and Mobil, BP, a British company created by the combination of British Petroleum and Amoco, Chevron, an American company created by the combination of Chevron (previously SoCal) and Texaco, and Total, a French company.

There are, however, many oil minors subcontracting companies that act as subsidiaries and intermediaries for these oil majors. First, between 2000 and 2018, global production growth outpaced reserve replacement growth, raising the cost of development. As a result, IOCs must make large investments in new consumer markets, including oil sands and heavy oil as well as gas-to-liquids and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Again, the majority of the world's remaining conventional reserves are either located in politically unstable countries or in technically challenging and expensive regions (such the Arctic and the Asia-Pacific). (For instance, Sudan, Sudan, or Nigeria) (Al-Fattah, 2020). Simply expressed, the rising replacement ratios of the reserves in IOCs' present oil fields pose a concern. Higher recovery costs are the result of new deposits being found more frequently in challenging regions like the Arctic, deep water, or complex geology. IOCs are therefore unwilling to conduct business or make investments in unstable or vulnerable areas (Bahgat, 2011).

Second, in order to increase reserve replacement development at a low cost and to extend high-risk exploration operations, IOCs pursued M&A to address reserve replacement deficits. The requirement for IOCs to invest in mega-projects, or operating relatively big fields, to meet future demand and turn a profit, however, increased as a result of their operations' scaling up, according to Ben-Salha and colleagues (2018). Third, as oil prices rise and the upside potential of exploration increases, IOCs are better equipped to look for safe exploration possibilities and work with enterprises that are specialised in that field

(Ben-Salha et al., 2018). IOCs also learned that they needed to partner with technologically savvy businesses, boost internal investments, and expand their R&D expenditures (Ben-Salha et al., 2018). Finally, for remote activities that involve significant technological, political, economic, and public scrutiny, strong supervisory mechanisms are needed. However, there are worries that concentrating too much on governance issues may lead to an increase in bureaucracy at the expense of market acceptability and shareholder rewards. IOCs must therefore balance maintaining large and important activities while also attending to shareholder needs and avoiding bureaucracy (Nawaz et al. 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to look into IOCs' operations as they relate to women's livelihood in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria. Ogulagha Island is a town in Delta State's Burutu Local Government Area. The municipality has 23,056 people living there. Ogulagha Island's population was projected to reach 23,056 people in 2018, primarily Ijaws who depend on farming and fishing as their main sources of income, using the National Population Commission's stipulated population growth rate of 3.2% based on the 2006 census (NPC, 2018). The study was qualitative and relied on the conduct of in-depth interviews and was complemented by secondary data from the internet, books, and journals. The population of the study were individuals residing in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique which was used in the selection of those who participated in the interview. The choice of the sampling technique was since the sampling technique allows the researcher to select interviewees based on their knowledge of the subject matter. The participants' consent was sorted by email, phone call or in person. Participants were given an informed agreement form before participating in the interview and this is in line with Juritzen, Grimen & Heggen's (2011) assertion. Participants were ensured of their anonymity and they have the right to discontinue at any point in time. Data obtained via the questionnaire were in-depth interviews and analysed thematically based on the objective of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to look into IOCs' operations as they relate to women's livelihood challenges in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria. SA mean Strongly agree, A mean Agree, D mean Disagree and SD mean Strongly Disagree.

Table 1: Responses to the Challenges Women Face Due to International Oil Corporations' (IOCs) Activities in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Summary percentage	
						% (SA+A) Yes	% (D+SD) No
1	The operations of IOCs have led to environmental degradation in Ogulagha Island.	471(68.0)	222(32.0)	0 (0.0)	0(0.0)	100.0	0.0
2	Operations of IOCs such as drilling, exploration, gas flaring and transportation of crude oil, pose massive human health jeopardy from the ingesting of polluted seafood.	489(70.6)	153(22.1)	0(0.0)	51(7.4)	92.6	7.4
3	The operations of IOCs have led	438(63.2)	131(18.9)	0 (0.0)	124(17.9)	82.1	17.9

	to a loss of sources of living, especially in the area of fishing and farming.						
4	The operations of IOCs have led to a loss of arable lands.	693(100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	100.0	0.0
5	The operation of IOCs has led to water pollution and hence our water is not drinkable	470(67.8)	223 (32.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	100.0	0.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 portrays the responses of the respondents based on the challenges women faced as a result of the operations of IOCs in the study area. The table reveals that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the functions of IOCs, have led to environmental degradation (68.0%); pose massive human health jeopardy from the ingesting of polluted seafood (70.6%); have led to a loss of sources of livelihood, especially in the area of fishing and farming (63.2%); loss of arable lands (100.0%) and water pollution thereby making the water undrinkable (100.0%). Results of the percentage summary of the respondents who were affirmative, not affirmative and undecided reveal that more than half of the respondents affirmed that the operations of IOCs in the study area have brought about the following challenges: environmental degradation (100.0%), loss of arable lands (100.0%), and water pollution (100.0%), followed by health problems (92.6%), and loss of sources of income (82.1%). From these results, it can be deduced that the major challenge they face as a result of the operations of IOCs in the study area is environmental degradation followed by loss of arable lands and water pollution.

From the interviews conducted, some interviewees also corroborated the findings gotten quantitatively and expanded on some. Most of the interviewees disclosed that some of the difficulties encountered by women in this study area were pollution from oil leakage and gas flaring. They further stated that women lacked equal employment/empowerment opportunities; they are often discriminated against in the distribution of empowerment initiatives by these IOCs. The women are also exposed to health, sexual abuse and harassment. A participant noted:

"...I have been exposed to various health challenges such as skin rashes and coughs, some women even suffer from fibroids, cancer and other health challenges. I am yet to enjoy a particular benefit associated with the presence of the IOCs..." (Participant 1)

Other participants corroborated this, and one of them had this to say:

"...They are afraid of the potential we women have in the development issues, and that is what I believe accounts for the continued relegation and lack of employment or empowerment opportunities for women..." (Participant 2)

Another participant noted that women are mostly treated as sex objects and playthings rather than appreciated for their roles as mothers and nation builders. In her words:

"...The men are afraid of what we women are capable of doing if given political and economic opportunities, they rather ask us to stay at home and make babies for them; the oil company workers on their part see women and young girls as objects for sexual gratification and pleasure ..." (Participant 3).

Another participant mentioned:

".....I would rather die or remain in poverty than have my wife, sisters or daughters work on the oil field because of the high rate of sexual harassment and exploitation..." (Participant 4)

This was validated by another participant who opined that:

“...Many of the women who live on this Island have at least two children for oil company workers yearly because they sell their bodies to make ends meet; Usually, these workers after impregnating the women abscond the Island and never return; leaving the women to cater for these children all alone, thereby increasing the economic hardship...” (Participant 5)

The findings clearly illustrated that the operations of IOCs have adversely affected the ecological health, communal and monetary existence of women in the study area. The people's philosophy and traditions have been unfavourably altered from the ancient and pious community standards. Young people, especially girls, are unintentionally drawn to such an appearance of flamboyant lifestyle with the advent of potential oil explorers who claim to offer higher standards of living because the operations of international oil corporations have rendered their normal means of subsistence irrelevant, these girls and women occasionally find themselves in unhealthy and toxic relationships. This is not always the result of their selfish desires (IOCs).

Several women turn out to be enduring or casual moneymaking sex personnel through such exercises. The health and social inferences are undesired pregnancies, unwanted offspring and single parenting since the majority of the oil emigrants and other labourers are not natives of the region. This is a complete abuse of the privileges of women by the oil corporations. Also, the outdated technique of revenue generation in the society, which is mainly fishing and farming has been destroyed, and as such, indigenes of the region under study especially women, are faced with abject poverty.

The findings also showed that the operations of IOCs in the study area have a damaging effect on the living condition of the people thus causing the place to be contaminated, infesting occupants with diverse diseases. Other consequences are the devastation of the ecology, the weakening of the soil against food production and global warming. The life span of the indigenes in the Niger Delta region is completely below average when compared to other regions due to inherent diseases that emanate from oil explorations. These findings agree with Onyena & Sam (2020) which states that fishing resources are swiftly dwindling through excess exploitation and contamination. Several oil operations have led to famine, leaving the area with hunger. This has hugely swerved the region such that farmers plant more and yield very little due to unfertile grounds. In addition, agricultural fields are contaminated with oil tumbles making lands to become hazardous for farming, even where they toil to grow crops.

5. CONCLUSION

The main goal of this paper was to examine how the operations of foreign oil companies (IOCs) affect women's livelihood in Ogulagha Island, Delta State, Nigeria. According to the findings, the difficulties women faced on Ogulagha Island included environmental degradation, health issues, loss of sources of income for women, the disappearance of arable land, and water pollution that rendered the island's water unfit for human consumption. These results suggest that IOC operations have caused hardship for women in the study area in the form of environmental degradation, health issues such as lung cancer, eye problems, reproductive issues, and other health challenges, loss of arable lands, and water pollution that had made access to drinking water a significant problem in the study area. Crop farming, one of the main sources of income for women, has become difficult to practice due to the loss of arable lands.

Additionally, water pollution brought on by oil spills has made it difficult for women to survive in the study area. All things considered, this shows that there is a significant connection between how IOCs operate and the difficulties these women faced in the research area. The study is only conducted in Delta State, Nigeria's Ogulagha Island. This indicates that the other areas of the state are not covered by the study's conclusions. This

does not, however, lessen or invalidate the investigation in any way, as the work can serve as a guide for additional research on the topic in the country's other geopolitical regions. These conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

- a. Oil corporations and government bodies should employ more pleasant and refined tactics, as well as the use of the current apparatus, which are less hazardous.
- b. The environment needs to be cleaned appropriately and consistently. The federal government needs to develop a schedule for implementing UNEP's recommendations for ecological cleanups, such as the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP), which was established to oversee such efforts.
- c. Third World Organization for Women in Science (TWOWS), National Associations of University Women (NAUW), Women in Development (WID), and other non-governmental organizations should be more involved in promoting women's issues. This will help to ensure that the peace movement is important, particularly in disaster zones like the Niger Delta.
- d. IOCs operating in Nigeria's Niger Delta should provide opportunities for the host society's citizens to create income and jobs; this will lessen the effects of social and commercial insufficiency, which complicated expansion plans and procedures in the region.
- e. IOCs should model strategies for societal incentives and disincentives, such as resident credit lines for productive resource workers in certain industries, like agriculture, which can employ a large number of labourers. The oil companies should make every effort to prevent future oil leaks, and if they do, they must adequately compensate the general public.

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