

**Appraisal of Chevron Nigeria Limited and Host-Communities Relations in Warri South West LGA, Delta, Nigeria, 1997 – 2013**

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**Abstract:** *The study examines the nature of relations between Chevron Nigeria Limited and its host communities in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. The nature of relations between multinational oil companies, which are the main actors in the Nigerian oil industry, and their host-communities is crucial to the socio-economic well-being of Nigeria. Petroleum schools, geology and others supported by associations such as the SPE, AAPG et al are in part responsible for the boom in technical studies related to petroleum. It is necessary to also encourage the development of technical studies related more to the social sciences, respecting each one of the actors involved. The study employs the qualitative research methodology. It is presented using the thematic and chronological tools of historical analysis. Data and information are gathered from both primary and secondary sources to analyse the subject matter. Findings indicate that, while there is evidence of community development efforts in the communities studied, the communities relations with Chevron Nigeria Limited was in large part conflictual. The study concludes that Chevron Nigeria Limited approached community relations in Warri South West LGA, Delta State using inappropriate strategies, which did not enable it meet the expectations of the people. It is recommended that it review its approach to host-communities relations. This should involve being more transparent and consulting the people for their needs before embarking on projects and programmes meant for them.*

**Keywords:** multinational oil companies, relations, host communities, Warri South West, Niger Delta

### **Introduction**

The nature of oil multinationals and host communities relations is crucial to the economic well-being of Nigeria and to her relations with the home country of the multinational oil company. Moreover, well-planned community relations programme can help oil multinationals to become recognised as good community citizens. A company that demonstrates interest in the socio-economic well-being of its host community enjoys long-term benefits such as community support, loyalty and the fostering of goodwill.

Izibili, a philosopher, observes that; “Business firms and the local communities where they operate depend on one another.”<sup>1</sup> Harmonious interactions between oil-bearing communities and oil companies and among the host communities can promote more productive operations of the oil companies. Such productive operations will in turn, generate wealth and improve standard of living of the citizenry. On the other hand, conflictual relationship between oil firms and their host communities can result in shut in production and disruption of economic activities. Thus, V. T. Jike, a sociologist, argues that, “Without enduring peace, oil production and distribution cannot be sustained.”<sup>2</sup> This importance of interdependent relationship between oil companies and host communities is re-emphasised by the following cited by Federal Government of Nigeria as part of the background to the 2019 Appropriation Act;

*Militancy in the Niger Delta has generally abated. Production increased from an average of 1.91mbpd in Q4 2018 to an average of 1.96mbpd in Q1 2019. Oil Production was affected by breaches of pipelines, maintenance and technical issues.*<sup>3</sup>

It is discernible from the above that the kind of relations that exists between oil-bearing communities and the multinational oil companies poses serious implications for their production level, political stability and continued peace in Nigeria. A study by Uchechukwu Wilson Nwosu, substantiates this fact. According to the study, there was significant relationship between the attitude to host-communities and the extent of operation of oil companies. The study also finds out that there was significant relationship between the company-community relations and the scope of transnational oil companies’ activities. It equally discovers significant relationship between the host communities’ view of the employment policies of oil companies.<sup>4</sup> As Davis and Franks rightly argue, company and community conflict engendered by environmental and social impacts can involve costs arising from temporary shutdowns or delays.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the unrest in the Niger Delta caused a shortage of about 40% in oil production in Nigeria. By early 2008, estimated losses of almost 1 million barrels per day were recorded due to unresolved conflicts, heightened by strikes, sabotage, illegal bunkering and disruptions.<sup>6</sup> This resulted in the loss of \$23.7 billion in oil revenues for Nigeria between January and September 2008.<sup>7</sup> For companies operating in the oil sector, therefore, harmonising the needs and views of stakeholders - such as the host communities - with the company's own obligations to investors and demonstrating how company activities can contribute both to GDP and to meaningful outcomes for the local communities have become critical concerns to earning the “social license to operate.”

When firms support programmes and projects that improve the quality of life in their host community, such as award of scholarship, urban renewal projects, performing arts, social and educational projects, children's activities, community organisations, and construction projects; crime prevention, employment, environmental projects, clean-up and beautification, recycling, and restoration they become seen as good community citizens. This can lead to absence of local tensions, of time spent in dispute or litigation, and of not having to absorb the costs of regulatory impositions which were unplanned and unbudgeted thereby guaranteeing smooth day to day running of an operation and raises profit levels.<sup>8</sup>

Multinational Oil Companies are the principal actors in the Nigerian oil industry. The Nigerian government gave oil exploration and mining licenses to them and now receives rents and royalties from them.<sup>9</sup> By 1965, seven multinational oil companies were already active in Nigeria. These companies included Shell-BP, Mobil Exploration Nigeria Limited, American

Overseas Petroleum Limited, Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited, Tennessee Nigeria Inc., Safrap and Nigerian Gulf Oil Company Limited<sup>10</sup> (now Chevron Nigeria Limited). The entrance of the multinational oil companies into Nigeria's economic space altered the socio-economic activities of their host communities including their mode of inter-group relations. By the turn of the 20th century, transnational oil companies' activities and relationship with the host communities had introduced new forms of conflicts and cooperation in Nigeria. The oil-induced conflicts culminated in the bombardment and sacking of some host communities in states like Bayelsa and Delta. Some of these oil companies were not only involved in the oil-induced conflicts but also borne the burden of loss together with the host communities.

In Delta State, as in other oil producing states of Nigeria, the Oil Multinationals were well received. Until the 1990s, there were mutual understanding and cordial relationship between these oil companies and their host communities.<sup>11</sup> The tide turned as from the 1990s with frequent clashes and hostage taking of oil workers increasingly reported. By 2013, major oil companies moved their operational offices from Delta State citing host communities unrests as a reason.<sup>12</sup> These include Shell-BP, Pan Ocean etc.

Indigenes of host- communities' agitations for a commensurate share of the oil booties as shown by current wave of protests against Chevron Corporation persisted and still persist.<sup>13</sup> Such scenarios present a future of possible festering of relations between the multinational oil companies and their host communities, a condition which can bring oil production to a halt and make the Nigerian economy that relies heavily on oil revenue to suffer. A critical appraisal of the nature of relations, between the host communities and oil companies, to establish factual areas of problems is therefore imperative. A study of past dynamics in Oil Companies and host-communities in Warri South West LGA relations will no doubt deepen understanding of the present nature of their relations and serve as a guide to forestalling future conflicts between them. However, such study appears to be missing from existing scholarly literature. Thus, despite the long history of Chevron Nigeria Limited's presence and dominance in Warri South West LGA Communities of Delta State, Nigeria, there is hardly any scholarly literature on the nature of its relationship with the host communities of the local government area. Existing literature which attempt a study of some of the communities in isolation are either mere propaganda to draw government attention or do not focus on the systematic study of the nature of relations between Chevron Nigeria Limited and host communities of Warri South West LGA.

It is against this background that this research work undertakes a scholarly investigation of the nature of relations that had existed between one of the multinational oil companies, Chevron Corporation and its host communities in Delta State with a view to providing a clearer perspective on the present problems tangling relations between them. Chevron Nigeria Limited has been operating in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State since its entrance into the Nigeria oil industry, first as Nigerian Gulf Oil Company and currently as Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL). It had one of its most critical and largest oil fields, the Okan, in the state. The company's presence meant that Delta State became a site of international relations of some sort. However nature of its interactions with people of the state seems not to have received much scholarly attention and its relationship with Warri South West LGA host communities appears to be absent from existing scholarly analysis. The scope of the research covers Abiteye, Okerenkoko, Kokodiagbene, Opia, Ikenyan, Deghele, Mandagho and Ugborodo host communities in Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State. The take-off date of this research is pegged on 1997, which is the year the local government area was created. Warri South-West is chosen for this study because besides being the home of two ethnic groups it

hosted one of Chevron's most critical and largest Oil Field in Nigeria, the Okan, in Escravos River. The study terminates in 2013 because that year witnessed exit of major oil companies, except Chevron, from Delta State.

### **Major Outlets of Chevron Nigeria Limited in Delta State**

Chevron Nigeria Limited Joint Venture (JV) operations with NNPC had large onshore operation outlets of oil and gas fields and shallow offshore fields in both oil and gas. The company oil facilities such as pipelines, rigs, terminals and wells criss-crossing the creeks, waters and lands of Warri South West were linked to trunk line that leads to Escravos loading terminal.<sup>14</sup> The Flow stations owned and operated by Chevron Nigeria Limited in the LGA included: Utunana flow station, with Kokodiagbene as host community, Didi and Alero flow stations connected to Utunana flow station of Kokodiagbene, Makaraba flow station, with Makaraba and Okoitoru as host communities, Abiteye flow station, with Binikurukuru and Kenghagbene as host-communities. On the other hand, CNL facilities and staff quarters in Escravos had Ugborodo communities, Deghele and Mandagho as hosts among others.<sup>15</sup>

Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) main terminal was in Escravos, Warri South West LGA of Delta State. All CNL oil and gas was processed in the Escravos terminal, after which the gas was distributed to the local market, while the oil was exported to both the Warri Refinery and tankers offshore. Chevron Nigeria Limited also had Escravos Gas to Liquids (EGTL) plant in Delta State. EGTL was a high-tech operations that collected natural gas produced from the fields and processed it into diesel and naphtha. EGTL was one of the only two in the world. It was linked to Chevron's Escravos gas plant. It was a 33,000-barrel-per-day gas-to-liquids plant.<sup>16</sup>

Escravos was source of a large quantity of Chevron's 300,000- to 310,000-barrel-per-day oil output in Nigeria, about one-sixth of the OPEC-member country's total production. The site was a global business centre with Chevron Corporation airport, offices, living quarters, a harbour, and garages; a free restaurant for workers with food brought in regularly by air, a movie house and a swimming pool.<sup>17</sup> Chevron equally had an office complex in Warri Delta State headed by the area manager. It also ran the Escravos clinic for workers in Escravos. The corporation also had a hospital, called the Chevron hospital in Warri Delta State. The hospital provided medical services for Chevron employees' spouses and their dependants.<sup>18</sup>

Chevron operated and had a 55 percent interest in Oil Mining Lease (OML) 140. The block lies in roughly 8,000 feet (2,438 m) of water, 90 miles (145 km) off the coast of the western Niger Delta region, and includes the Nsiko discoveries. A 3-D seismic data acquisition programme is planned for OML 140 and the adjacent OML 132 in 2019. Chevron is involved in natural gas projects in the western Niger Delta and Escravos areas, including the Escravos Gas Plant (EGP), the Escravos Gas-to-Liquids (EGTL) facility and the Sonam Field Development Project. The EGP has a total capacity of 680 million cubic feet per day of natural gas and LPG and a condensate export capacity of 58,000 barrels per day. The Sonam Field Development Project is designed to use the EGP facilities to deliver 215 million cubic feet of natural gas per day to the domestic gas market and produce a total of 30,000 barrels of liquids per day. Net production at the 40 percent-owned and operated project averaged 10,000 barrels of liquids and 80 million cubic feet of natural gas per day in 2018.<sup>19</sup>

### **Environmental Degradation and Pollution**

Oil Exploration and Exploitation activities destroyed and polluted the environment of the host communities in Warri South West Local Government Area. These usually occurred as a

result of oil spillage, gas flaring, dredging cum traffic of large motor-powered vessels.<sup>20</sup> Generally, Crude oil contains thousands of different chemicals, many of them toxic and some carcinogenic with no determined safe threshold for human beings exposure. For example, the pollution resulting from Texaco (now Chevron Nigeria Limited) spill of 1980, caused death of 180 people in a given community according to report. Inhabitants of some oil companies host communities said that spills in their area had made people who drank affected water sick.<sup>21</sup> They complained that fish taste of paraffin (kerosene) an indication that it had been contaminated by hydrocarbon. In the event of oil spillage, the oil gaseous and liquid components evaporated. Some quantity was dissolved in water and even oxidized; some underwent bacterial changes and sank to the soil by gravitational action. The soil was then contaminated with a serious impact on the terrestrial life. As the evaporation of the volatile lower molecular weight components affected aerial life, so the dissolution of the less volatile components with the resulting emulsified water, affected aquatic life. Spilled oil killed plants and animals in the estuarine zone. It killed organisms that live there on beaches, ocean floor and benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms such as crabs. It poisoned algae, disrupted major food chains and decreased the yield of edible crustaceans. It also coated birds, impairing their flight or reducing the insulative feature of their feathers, thus making the birds more vulnerable to cold. Oil spills endangered fish hatcheries in coastal waters and as well contaminated the flesh of commercially valuable fish. In most of the host communities closest to oil facilities, even when there had been no recent spill, an oily sheen covered the fresh water areas, the same water that the inhabitants used for various domestic purposes such as, cooking, drinking and washing. Large areas of the mangrove ecosystem were destroyed overtime due to oil spillage. Mangrove forest was easily destroyed by oil spills, because the soil soaked up the oil like a sponge and re-pumped it every rainy season. The mangrove was once a source of both wood used as cooking fuel by the indigenous people and a habitat for the area's biodiversity. It lost its good state to sustain this use due to oil spillages.<sup>22</sup>

Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) estimates based on the quantities supplied by the oil companies showed that approximately 2,300 cubic meters of oil were spilled in 300 separate every year. A number of oil spills, impact of which on the environment spanned our period of study, occurred in Warri South West before and between 1997 and 2013. These included, the 1978 Gulf Oil spillage, 1980 Texaco oil spillage that destroyed 340 hectares of mangroves, 2012 Chevron's KS Endeavour drilling rig explosion among others.<sup>23</sup> How these affected Chevron Nigeria Limited and Host communities relationship will be seen later in this paper.

“Formation water” also called “produced water” is another oil related substance identified to have caused environmental pollution in our area of study. Formation water is separated from hydrocarbon fluids with which it is mixed underground. In some cases, it was treated to remove residual oil. But when released directly into the environment in large volume it combined with oil leaks to produce long term polluting effects.<sup>24</sup> Chevron Nigerian Limited was said to have pumped, for many years, hot untreated formation water directly into mangrove creeks in Abiteye, on the Escravos River in Warri South West LGA, Delta State, without effort at channelling it into the main tidal channel where it would be diluted and cause less damage.<sup>25</sup>

According to Human Rights Watch, Oil leaks were usually from high pressure pipelines, thus they gushed out with force over a wide area, destroying crops, artificial fishponds used for fish farming, “economic trees” (that is, economically valuable trees, including those growing “wild”

but owned by particular families) and other income-generating assets. A leak even if small could wipe out a year's food supply for a family, together with earnings from commercial goods.<sup>26</sup>

Gas flaring was another activity associated with oil extraction that polluted the host-communities in Warri South West Area. Gas flaring involved burning of the natural gas produced as a by-product of oil produce. This created non-stop high-intensity flame. Flared gas emitted carbon dioxide and methane into the host-communities, changed local microclimates and caused acid rain. Gas flare according to a respondent from Tebu-Ijo, caused deposit of thick soot on the zinc of buildings around the area where it took place.<sup>27</sup> The soot was known to contain some dangerous chemicals like amorphous carbon that negatively affected soil fertility. And also polluted all natural sources of water. Gas flares were also believed to produce excessive heat that depleted the ozone layer. Emission from the gas flares had reduced the life span of iron roofing sheets. Warri Women protest in 2002 brought to public attention the emergence of prevailing bronchial diseases and eye abnormalities resulting from gas flaring by oil companies in their area.<sup>28</sup>

Site preparation for drilling often involved clearing of vegetation and dredging in the coastal areas. Dredging by Chevron was another activity that damaged the ecology of the dredged area and the area where the spoils were dumped. Despite that dredged material was in principle dumped on land, some of it found its way back into the water, thereby increasing turbidity, reducing sunlight penetration and thus plant life, and possibly driving away fish. Once exposed to oxygen, dredged materials in mangrove areas turn acidic. In addition, silt dredged and dumped on cultivated levees can reduce farm produce because of building canals (canalization).<sup>29</sup>

### **Increased Poverty and Mortality Rates**

Data from the Federal Office of Statistics indicate in 1980 that 19.8 per cent of Delta State was living below poverty line. This was when the oil exploitation activities were still in their embryos. As the oil development progressed through the years poverty level of the state rose. So, in 1985, 41.9 per cent of the population lived below poverty line. In 1996, the number of those rose to 56.1 per cent. And by 2010 Delta State absolute poverty incidence was 63.3 per cent.<sup>30</sup>

The livelihood of the people of the host communities in Warri South West depended on their environment. As they were coastal people whose environment was criss-crossed by a web of creeks they were mainly fisher folks, salt makers and poultry manufacturers. A handful of them also engaged in farming. Oil development with its associated hazards discussed above disrupted these traditional occupations by the turn of the 20th century. The socio-economic history of Delta State as from the late 20th century was dominated by the struggles and conflicts over oil revenues and oil rich land.<sup>31</sup>

The pollution of the environment by oil spills and the gas flaring drastically reduced soil fertility and aquatic life, rendering the pre-oil economy of the Ijaw and Itsekiri unsustainable. On the other hand, there were the highly paid oil workers, oil *bunkerers*, corrupt local chiefs and youth leaders, who diverted paid oil company CSR investments into their pockets, and corrupt politicians whose purchasing power resulted in inflation, further complicating the economic conditions of the people.<sup>32</sup> The central government did not put the money it generated from oil and gas back into the development of the host communities to cushion the negative effects of the oil industry activities.<sup>33</sup> The capitalist orientation of the oil giant also ensured that it maximised profit and guide against what it perceived as loss. Consequently, there was large-scale unemployment as the young ones deserted the villages mostly to the nearby emerging city of

Warri in search of greener pastures. This deepened poverty in the villages hosting Chevron Nigeria Limited.<sup>34</sup>

According to a school teacher, Kessington Ojiofor, who once lived in Warri South West LGA, the worsening economic conditions of the villages and joblessness of the young ones, even in the city, in the midst of affluence of a few who had access to the oil money, made it easy to mobilise some of them for illegal activities like oil *bunkering*.<sup>35</sup> The Council on Foreign Relations, describes bunkering as follow:

*all acts involving oil theft, including diversion and smuggling of oil and unauthorized loading of ships. One common process requires tapping into an oil pipeline and transporting the oil elsewhere to be sold internationally or refined locally. In order to access the oil, a small group of welders will puncture a pipeline at night, establishing a tapping point from which the group can operate.*<sup>36</sup>

Another respondent explains that bunkering was running like Mexico drugs cartel. There was usually the *Oga on Top* (the boss) who paid the boys that worked for him as *bunkerers*. With quick huge cash flowing from illegal activities of bunkering, those involved in it were not ready to give it up; especially with the realisation, that falling back to poverty state would be the consequence.<sup>37</sup> This was probably why the stage was set for a showdown, when the federal government moved against *bunkering* in the interest of the state and the oil companies. Special Report by the United States Institute of Peace reveals that, “the proceeds from oil theft are used to buy weapons and ammunition, helping to sustain the armed groups” who were fighting the federal government.<sup>38</sup> The deployment of soldiers and navy in the creeks to stop bunkering resulted in frequent clashes with bunkering cartels sometimes leading to fatalities.<sup>39</sup>

Community leaders and youths who received money on behalf of the host communities were known to have diverted such funds to personal and political use. They built for themselves mansions in the city of Warri and other developed places like Asaba, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Lagos among others. As a result, the compensation money paid by the oil company to the community was only reflected in abandoned projects.<sup>40</sup>

Whilst Chevron Nigeria Limited reiterated that it did not interfere in the host communities’ politics, it was accused on different occasions of aligning with some executive members of the community not accepted by the communities. There were allegations of some indigenes of the host communities not living in the host communities who registered for contracts with the oil company. The proceeds of such contracts they got never reflected in the host communities because they lived in the city where they spent the money. This in turn compounded the situation in their home villages, as the money was not in circulation there.<sup>41</sup> Referring to the poverty level, the large-scale unemployment and absence of meaningful social investments in the host communities, V.T. Jike argues:

*The loss of traditional peasant holdings and ancillary jobs provoked a chain of psychological trauma for several individuals who are no longer able to meet traditional obligations. These perceptions of deprivations tend to coalesce into a general level of class or status consciousness, which crystallise around and [an] ethnic pivot in the form of ethnic militia to forcefully press for change.*<sup>42</sup>

Thus, poverty and underdevelopment of the villages were dynamics, which precipitated conflicts in the host villages.

There was also increase in mortality rates. This development was due to factors such as deepening poverty, oil pipelines explosion, oil related violent conflicts and discharges from oil exploration and exploitation. The inhabitants of the host communities became under-nourished as their source of food supply was drastically affected by the oil development. This made them susceptible to common diseases as their body systems lacked the nutrients to fight off efficaciously such ailments. The growing poverty among them meant that they did not have the money to go for treatment in the event of illness.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, as the Warri women during their protest in 2002 pointed out, there came to be emergent of carcinogenic diseases in the oil-bearing communities. The inhabitants suffered from respiratory diseases, which resulted from constant exposure to gas flaring. Skin and lung cancer among other diseases were also on the increase.<sup>44</sup> The people who lived in the oil-bearing communities were said to have shorter life span owing to all these health complications.<sup>45</sup> Swiss University researchers discovered that neonatal mortality increased if a child's mother lived near an oil spill before conception. In the words of Roland Holdler, one of the researchers: "Oil spills that occur within 10 kilometres prior to child conception strongly increase the risk of mortality during the first months of life." Ten kilometres proximity to the site of spills increased the neonatal death rate by 38 deaths per 100,000 live births. Although nearness to oil spills site did not have such effect on pregnant women, oil spills also increased infant mortality after the first months of life and continue to have adverse effects on the health of surviving children according to the study. Children who escaped the neonatal stage still have a high chance of suffering health complications during their first year of life, including a low weight-to-height ratio. The researchers based their findings on 2,744 mothers living in oil spill- area, 5,296 oil spills between January 2005 and up to July 2014.<sup>46</sup>

Oil related conflicts were other phenomena that accentuated death rates in Warri South West LGA host communities of Delta State. Pipeline vandalism constituted the main causes of oil violent deaths in 2006. 957 fatalities were recorded in 2006 from June to December. Also in 2008 there were 122 fatalities, most of which revolved around the activities of the JTF. And in 2009, there was a staggering casualty of 1,089 following the major outbreak of violent clash in Warri South West. Violent events were precipitated by more and more intense activities - legal and illegal - around oil. In 2013 there were 25 fatal events as well. Adeola Adams asserts that Delta was the most violent state in terms of fatalities in oil distribution, followed by Lagos and Rivers states. Delta, they concluded was the most risky state for oil distribution because it had the highest relative violent death figures.<sup>47</sup>

Pipeline explosions were other factors contributing to increased mortality rates in Delta state. The identified causes of such blowouts were accidents during operations, vandalism by *bunkers*, old and poorly maintained pipelines. In the event of such oil pipeline explosions, lives of those close to the scene of explosion were lost. Hence, oil pipeline explosions formed a cause of horrible deaths in the host-communities.<sup>48</sup> Thus, on July 2000 about 250 lives were lost to oil pipeline explosion in Delta state when vandals tampered with a Warri pipeline meant to export refined products into the area because of a prolonged closure of the 110,000 b/d Kaduna refinery for repairs. Another explosion in July 16, 2000 at Ijalla, an Itsekiri community in Delta State cut down 150 people.<sup>49</sup> The consciousness that when a pipeline exploded it could kill, was no doubt, a constant source of worry to inhabitants of host communities.

## Chevron Corporation Approach to Host Communities Relations

Chevron Nigeria Limited aimed at communicating openly with the public about potential impact of its operation on the public or the environment. It also had the objective of building a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with its host communities to become the oil company of choice in Nigeria. Chevron gave Human Rights Watch some publications, to inform local communities about its activities and perhaps to demonstrate its stated aims.<sup>50</sup>

The company carried out development projects in only the communities closest to where it operated, rather than in Warri South West in general. It did not accommodate impacted communities.<sup>51</sup> Impacted communities were communities that served as gateway to its sites of operations and those communities its oil and pipelines passed through.<sup>52</sup> According to some respondents during the fieldwork, not only the communities nearest to CNL site but also some other communities like Tejuboh and Ogbe-Ijoh suffered the impact of oil exploitation activities in Warri South West LGA. Oil spillage and constant movement of oil related traffic back and forth their waterways for example, reduced aquatic life and made fishing activity - their mainstay - unprofitable.<sup>53</sup> In addition, emission from flaring of gas corroded zinc and caused eyes problems among other health complications. However, Chevron Nigeria Limited did not consider these communities in their social development programmes as it viewed them not close to its site of operation.<sup>54</sup>

Chevron Nigeria Limited approach to host communities was portrayed in a report of one of the national dailies as one which segregated itself from the communities where it operated and unperturbed by their conditions. According to the report;

*Separated by just a tiny creek and a fence that is beyond a physical barrier, Arunto (Ode-Ugborodo) and Chevron yard could not be farther apart. While Chevron 'community' is a beautiful island in the sea, the other is withering; its shoreline losing metres of land yearly to an unfriendly incursion of the sea. On one side are neat houses, clean streets (on which heavy-duty vehicles, trucks and cars cruise to and fro) and functional amenities, as well as an airfield where the company's top shot fly in and out without coming in contact with their hosts. On the other sides, residents rely on motorcycle ploughing through dusty, sandy paths. They live in zinc and thatch houses without toilets and pipe borne water.<sup>55</sup>*

Chevron Corporation however boasts of taking its responsibility as a corporate citizen in Nigeria seriously. It argues that it was active in many projects that promoted health, education and economic development in Nigeria.<sup>44</sup> Deji Haastrup, Chevron's General Manager listed three primary focus areas for Chevron's community investments to include improving access to health care needs; enabling education and training opportunities and promoting sustainable livelihoods.<sup>56</sup>

The company held quarterly meetings with representatives of local communities it recognised as its host communities. The communities, at Town Hall meetings, elected these representatives and their names sent to Chevron. Majority of the communities held their elections every two or three years. Chevron also organised regular town hall meetings and public enlightenment forums.<sup>57</sup> According to Chevron, it did not interfere in the internal politics of host communities. The corporation "has an international policy that requires individual Chevron

operations to maintain absolute neutrality in matters of the internal politics of the host country in which they are operating.”<sup>58</sup> Its Community Relations Officers were employed based on their academic qualifications and experience in relationship building. More than 75% of the Community Relations staff was made up of people from host communities.<sup>59</sup>

The department of Policy, Government and Public Affairs (PGPA) was charged with the responsibilities of being the linking bridge between CNL and its host-communities. PGPA among other things had to engage in regular meaningful communications with host-communities; promote economic and social development by CNL Corporate Public Policy (CPP). Chevron engagement process with host communities followed four stages. Stage 1 was the preparation step. This stage involved the company consideration and matching of the profits i.e. engagement objectives, to the objectives of the project. It then weighed costs of the project, which usually included money, workers, training and skills. Next was the second stage during which the engagement team assessed potential management plans and challenges like cultural diversity. Stage 3 was the point the company communicated findings from analyses undertaken to the stakeholders. At this point plans could be changed and new proposals introduced or debating the plans all over. The fourth stage was the supervision and review stage in order to actualise the business objectives and project engagements set out in stage 1. <sup>60</sup> Whereas the community engagement approach, looked good, it appeared not to have been successful in that many abandoned and profitless projects awarded by Chevron littered the host communities by the turn of 2013 amid agitations from host communities. <sup>61</sup>

Chevron Nigeria Limited development initiatives were largely unprogrammed and low profile until the increase and proliferation of oil-related violent conflicts in the 1990’s and beyond. They were late in coming as its first identifiable CSR project termed Western Niger Delta Development Programme (WNDDP) was only launched in 2000. Western Niger Delta Development Programme was a five – year rolling project with \$1 million project budget every year. It was designed for the host communities of Escravos where CNL had about 90 per cent of its investments. <sup>62</sup> A worker with CNL’s contractor in Escravos (now working with one of the National Oil Companies) said there was nothing on ground that could be described as Gulf Oil (Chevron Nigeria Limited’s predecessor in Delta State) or Chevron Nigeria Limited development projects in the host communities before 2000. Sherif Mulade who replied to a question about Gulf Oil’s development initiatives equally argued that there was no social investment project in the host communities for which to remember Gulf Oil. And that, prior to the creation of RDC no meaningful CSR projects existed as contribution to the life of the people. Specifically, he stressed that, not until the 2005 GMoU, there was no major CSR initiative that could be credited to Chevron Nigeria Limited. <sup>63</sup> The idea therefore is that, relations between CNL and the host communities festered before it began to respond to the need of being a responsible citizen of the host communities. Its CSR initiatives were to that extent reactionary to curb an ensuing security threat to its operation and personnel and not borne out of genuine support to the communities from where it had gotten so much. Thus, people probably got the message that CNL would only respond only when it was pushed.

Until 2005, the company approach involved one-time offer of infrastructure development grants or programmes targeted at reducing local demands to have their share of the oil wealth. Chevron financed, designed, planned, contracted and built CSR projects under this model. This approach attempted to provide much-needed social amenities and services. However, it was eventually found to be unsuccessful. During the Warri War of 2003 between the Ijaw and Itsekiri most of the developmental projects were destroyed. An example of such projects was the

hospital that was badly affected. CNL pointed to this destruction as mark of un-sustainability of their approach.<sup>64</sup>

Thus in 2005, it adopted the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) as a new approach to community relations. This new model entails giving communities a greater role in managing their development through Regional Development Committees. The objectives of the GMoU include *inter alia*, to develop the capacity of the host communities to negotiate with the oil companies for development financing, and then handle the process of selecting and executing the development projects in their communities.<sup>65</sup> Clay Neff, President, Chevron Africa and Latin America Exploration and Production Company (CALAEP), describes the new approach as follow:

*This public-private partnership approach to community engagement involves participatory development processes that help resolve conflict and address community needs near our Niger Delta operations.*<sup>66</sup>

The GMoUs were put in place between clusters of communities, Chevron, and the state government. According to Lucky Nengite, the legal counsel to CNL, the function of CNL was to aid communities to help themselves. He pointed out that, GMoU was not a legal contract, but an agreement intended to give CNL a moral responsibility to do what it said it would do. The new approach was seen by CNL as a unique public-private approach that encouraged sustainable economic and social stability. CNL in collaboration with partners created Regional Development Committees (RDCs) for each GMoU. The RDCs were composed of community members elected to represent local interests and oversee GMoU implementation in a given area. They took over responsibility for how to use funding provided by Chevron Nigeria Limited and for doing the projects chosen. Chevron Nigeria Limited took part in committees and boards that approved projects and provided yearly project funding.<sup>67</sup>

The RDC's were believed to have built small rural "cottage" hospitals, guesthouses, shoreline protection, solar-powered water projects, and the funding of scholarships. For a proposal of the GMoU to receive the backing or approval of CNL, CNL must have stake and the financial well withal. The budgets for GMoU programmes for a given period were negotiated and accepted by the stakeholders. Then the funds were paid into an account all stakeholders were signatories to. All stakeholders got Mandate Cards with specimen signatures that confirmed they were signatories to the account to guarantee transparency and accountability. CNL funding was dependent on the communities not obstructing projects because of grievances. It would release ninety percent of the agreed amount for a project at the beginning and withhold the balance of ten percent until the completion of its operation in the area without disruption from the communities. Each RDC consisted of three committees: project review, conflict resolution, audit and accounts. These committees, which have representatives from the NDDC, donors, NGOs and State and Local Governments are subsumed under the umbrella of the Community Engagement Management Board (CEMB). RDCs produce a three-year development plan based on Sustainable Livelihood Assessment conducted by a facilitating NGO. Project decision and implementation were the responsibility of the RDCs. There was also the Peace Review Committee meant to ensure that the communities maintain peace and harmony throughout the duration of any GMoU project.<sup>68</sup> Between 2005 and 2012, the NNPC/Chevron JV funded the RDCs close to N10 billion. The money was used by the RDCs to execute infrastructural projects and programmes according to Energy Mix report.<sup>69</sup>

Two of the RDCs were active in Warri South West. These were Itsekiri Regional Development Council (IRDC) and Egbama Gbaramatu Development Foundation (EGDF). The role of the IRDC was to award contracts and implement projects for the sustainable development of 24 oil-producing Itsekiri communities that were host to CNL. The Council in partnership with Chevron went round the communities and the council proposed projects that could alleviate the sufferings of the people, for which the company made funds available.<sup>70</sup>

Subsequently, N7.2 billion was given to the IRDC for the development of twenty four Itsekiri communities, among which were Ugborodo communities. By the turn of 2013, while abandoned projects littered Itsekiri-land, the N7.2 billion could not be accounted for. This would later result in a legal conflict between Itsekiri women, led by Chief (Mrs) Rita Lori Ogbebor and Keystone Bank, Chief Ayiri Emami, Austin Oniyesan, Richard Omare of Itsekiri Regional Development Council (IRDC) and Chevron Nigeria Ltd (CNL). The women bemoaned the lack of development in Itsekiri land and blamed Itsekiri Regional Development Council (IRDC) and Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) for the lack of development. A section of Itsekiri people believed that the IRDC was an instrument in the hands of the multinational oil company to further exploit the Itsekiri-land without reparation.<sup>71</sup>

Egbama Gbaramatu Development Foundation was the RDC constituted to oversee the development of the Ijaw communities, which were host to Chevron Nigeria Limited. It was originally known as Egbama Gbaramatu Development Council. However, according to its secretary, Foundation was substituted for council at the point of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission in order to among other things expand its scope to be able to interface with other donor agencies since funds from Chevron were usually not enough. Chevron Nigeria Limited released funds to the RDC annually for development of host-communities. The fund covered 4 quarters of the year.<sup>72</sup>

The implementation of GMoU meant that CNL social involvement focus was turned to economic development, recruitment and boosting local earnings that could in turn generate genuine wealth in local communities. The new model was anchored on:

*A systematic diagnosis of the market issues that yields market-driven solutions based on building local capacity and opening doors for new market actors. Effective partnerships with local communities, leaders, and other development partners and private companies that can adroitly maximize the effectiveness and consistency of investments.*<sup>73</sup>

Since its inception, according to Chevron, the NNPC/Chevron joint venture has spent more than \$118 million on roughly 600 programmes that have provided scholarships; built new schools, medical facilities and housing; and supported agriculture development and infrastructure improvements. In 2011, CNL declared \$50 million alliance with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Niger Delta Partnership Initiative (NDPI) Foundation to support a number of programmes designed to address socio-economic challenges in the Niger Delta region. The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) was incorporated in Nigeria to implement and support these programmes. NDPI and PIND, according to Chevron's official, complemented Chevron's social investment efforts by focusing on one strategic objective: achieving a peaceful, enabling environment for equitable growth in the Niger Delta.<sup>74</sup>

Secretary to the Ijaw RDC asserted that the post GMoU period was better than the period before because, there were projects and programmes on ground executed by the Egbama

Gbaramatu Development Foundation. Hitherto, according to him, there was little or nothing to show for oil exploitation in their communities.<sup>75</sup> Chevron Nigeria Limited equally believed that the GMoU enhanced its relationships with host-communities, reduced ethnic conflicts, and resulted in faster execution and lower costs of business projects compared with the pre-GMoU period.<sup>76</sup> These positions are at variance with the realities of the era.

Instances abound where money designated for development, based on the GMoU, did not get to their targets. These sparked off increased, intra-communal conflicts, protests against CNL, and the Federal Government. For example, the rise of the Niger Delta Avengers in Delta State after 2005 when the GMoU was signed and the bombardment of Warri South West host communities – events that never occurred before 2005 – can only explain as self-delusion an argument that ethnic conflicts or oil related conflicts were reduced by the GMoU. Jeff Ewing, CNL managing director once said, “Now everyone realizes that if our business is disrupted, they could lose an opportunity to improve their community and are damaging their economic livelihood. This builds trust and a more stable operating environment.”<sup>77</sup> This suggests that the GMoU was introduced with the ulterior desire of protecting CNL operations and not with genuine interest in the development of the host communities.

## **Conclusion**

On the strength of the findings in this research, the study identifies the following as main drivers of conflicts in CNL and host communities relations in Delta State between 1997 and 2013; initial insular mentality of Chevron Nigeria Limited to the host communities; its reactionary CSR social investments and payment of cash to militant groups; government payments to militant leaders; criminal diversion of money meant for host communities’ development; irregularities in recruitment and in the award of contracts as well as scholarships. In 2005 perhaps to create its own counter alibi and pacify those who might disrupt its activities following the violent Ijaw and Itsekiri fratricide of 2003, CNL introduced GMoU and relinquished its social responsibility functions to a group of persons who constituted regional development councils. By relating with a few persons, some of whom did not live in the host communities, CNL absent itself from the grassroots society and made itself a perpetual stranger to the people. As a result, when CNL could not meet its terms of agreement with the conflict entrepreneurs purporting to represent the communities, the conflict merchants easily gained support from the local people to protest against the oil company.

In a nutshell, Chevron Nigeria Limited was involved in oil related violence in Delta state between 1997 and 2013. Its CSR efforts were not satisfactory to the host communities. This was compounded by RDC’s members who embezzled funds meant for community projects. CNL reacted to host communities’ grievances of neglect, only to create RDC’s some of whose members diverted its funds. Conflicts with Chevron Nigeria limited and intra- community as well as inter- ethnic communities remained a marked feature of the period studied. Based on the findings the study concludes that, Chevron Nigeria Limited strategies in approaching host-communities relations in Warri South West LGA were inappropriate hence it failed in creating cordial atmosphere for its operations. It is recommended that it review its strategies and demonstrate more, transparency in award of contracts and giving of employment slots to the people. It should also look at organising inter-cultural programmes such as debates, football matches or even dance festivals between Itsekiri and Ijaw who occupy the Local Government Area.

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