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Intra-Communal Conflict and the Politics of Oil Compensation Sharing among Indigenes of Ilaje Community, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Payment and distribution of oil compensation as a benefit for oil exploration impact has often resulted in communal conflicts between and within oil producing communities of Ilaje coastal area of Ondo State, Nigeria. This study examined local politics and conflict inherent in oil compensation agitation and distribution in relevant communities. It synthesized Joseph prebendalism theory and Mills' elite theory as its theoretical base with specific emphasis on the local politics on agitation, negotiation and distribution of oil compensation. Thirteen communities were purposively selected from the coastal communities. Qualitative data collection methods were mainly employed for this research. These included In-depth interviews with traditional leaders, Focus Group Discussions among community youth leaders and Key Informant Interviews were done amongst community representatives. Data collection was complemented with a community survey to capture the views of community members. Increase in conflict and agitation for oil compensation in oil producing communities arose from differentials in oil compensation categories in the study area which deepened oil politics and conflicts arising from the prebendal roles of the elites and traditional rulers. The work suggested more proactive measures for restructuring oil compensation payment and distribution.

Keywords: Intra-communal conflict, oil compensation, politics and producing communities

Introduction

Agitation for oil compensation and its distribution have always been a knotty issue causing conflict and frictions amongst and between people in oil producing communities in Nigeria. Such conflict and agitations often arose from groups who felt they have been denied of what should have been given to them as shares of the benefits from oil exploration and its impacts on their

environment. Thus, compensation payments, share and distribution have been identified as main cause of intra and inter communal conflicts (Alao, 2007).

While oil compensations are sometimes processed, delayed and finally paid; the sharing formula often generates conflict and fierce politics between and within communities especially, the identified oil producing communities. However, while most of the money has been spent as "compensatory funds" in some communities, it has been largely misspent and at times appropriated by the acclaimed community representatives who formed group of agitators and negotiators for oil compensation in coastal communities of Ilaje, Ondo State, Nigeria (Ololajulo 2006).

Oil among other natural resources has given rise to vertical conflicts among different communities/kingdoms and groups across geographical boundaries in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria. Horsfall (1999) opines that crisis that arose from oil production were not limited to revenue sharing. According to him, exploration had left in its trail a complex mix of problems that included environmental pollution, reduction in value of aquatic resources among others. For example, inter and intra community conflicts between groups, within kingdoms or communities are common with oil companies and government over compensation (NDDC, 2001).

While the oil companies have held the belief persistently that what they pay as compensation is adequate, the communities on the other hand have maintained that compensation is anything but adequate. The politics of oil exploration called "oil dichotomy," for example, in the studied local communities and among subgroups in the oil producing communities of Ilaje, Ondo state has brought in dysfunctional changes that ramify "oil producing communities, non-producing communities, core producing communities, semi core, major communities, affected or impacted communities"- these splinter groups as well as community with identities are the politics that defined the dynamics of oil compensation payment, negotiation and distribution.

Albert (2003) opined that oil compensation conflicts either between Arogbo-Ijaw vis-a-vis Mahin/Ugbo Ilaje and other groups is as a result of benefits that come from exploration activities and not exploration itself. Oil production started in Nigeria in 1958 and since then up to date, petroleum industry has remained the biggest source of environmental pollution in Nigeria industrial sector. In all stages- exploration, production, processing, transportation and utilization, the activities of oil industry pollute the environment. Exploration of oil in Nigeria interfaces and further disrupts both natural and social life. The disruption causes conflict which needed to be addressed; and one of the ways to address it is through the payment of compensation to the host communities.

However, disputes over oil compensation agitation and distribution are arising from gross disparities in wealth among different communities and between groups in the coastal area of Ilaje, Ondo State, Nigeria. Thus as regards "oil politics," between Mahin Ilaje and Ugbo Ilaje communities and in recent times within Ugbo Ilaje communities hitherto identified as "oil

producing communities”; the situation which has resulted in struggle for reform of economic system to ensure equitable distribution of oil compensation between and within communities.

Exploration of oil has been reported to be predominantly carried out in Ugbo Ilaje kingdom, the eastern coastline of Ilaje local government, and mostly in Ugbo ward *four (4), five (5) and six (6)*; all in the Ugbo communities. All of these automatically gave Ugbo identity of oil producing community and Mahin Kingdom, western coastline, non oil producing community (Ololajulo, 2006). However, since consequences of oil exploration activities are extensive, payment and shares of compensation, compensatory schemes, funds and projects have often caused total warfare as groups and communities have always been at loggerhead over “who gets what, when and how?”

However, while most studies on resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria, have continued to look at issues such as: impacts of oil exploration by the Multinational oil Companies (MNOCs) on the economic activities of people and their environment as the major causes of conflict, little attention has been paid to internal politics and the crisis that surround oil compensation paid by MNOCs, the agitation and the distribution process among the key players in the oil producing communities. This paper examines local politics inherent in oil compensation agitation, negotiation, payment and distribution among oil producing communities of Ilaje, Ondo State with a view to promoting equity and sustainable development, peace and tranquillity among the inhabitants of oil producing communities.

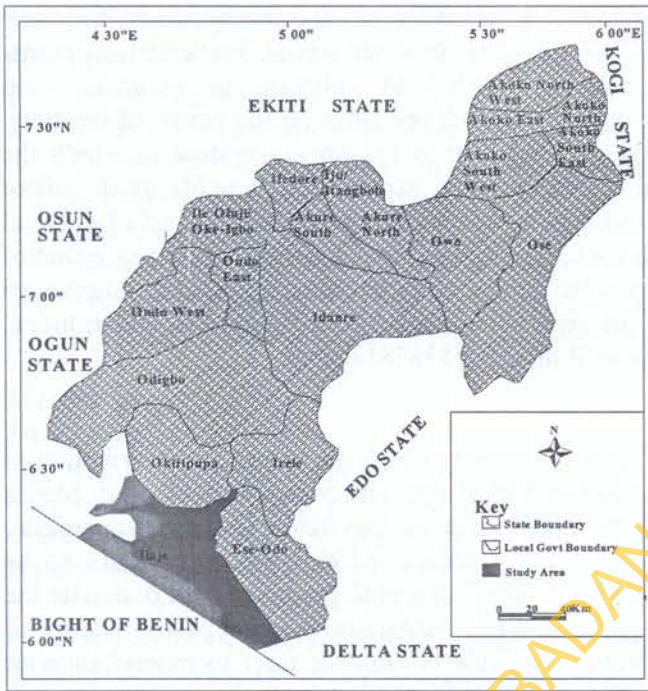


Figure 1.1: Map of Ondo State showing Ilaje, Ilaje LG Area
 Source: Ministry of Land and Housing, Ondo State (2013)

Theoretical Framework

After much search to examine theories suitable for this discourse, two theories; Prebendalism and Elite theories are found relevant and are discussed in this section. According to Wehmeier *et al.* (2005), a theory is seen as a formal set of ideas that is intended to explain why something happens or exists. The purpose of theory therefore, is to explain things that have occurred with a view to dealing with problems which arose or may arise (Percy, 1968). To this end, a number of factors have been given by scholars in their explanation of local politics, communal conflicts and resource misappropriation by the local elites.

Prebendalism Theory

Joseph Richard (1987) is usually credited with the theory of Prebendalism. He first used the term prebendalism to describe patron-client or neo-patrimonialism in Nigeria. He analyses right or entitlement that people feel they have to the revenues of the state. The elected officials, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong always feel they have right to a share of government revenues. According to the theory of Prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends, manipulated and appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups (Joseph, 1996).

Prebendalism is primarily a function of the competition for, and appropriation of the office of the state. In other words, prebendalism points towards the material resources needed to cultivate or maintain such relationship and the consequences of such pressures on the nature of the state. Joseph argued further that prebendalism is not only a system in which the offices of the state are allocated and then exploited as benefits by the office holders, "but also one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or ambition, but concurrently the satisfaction of the short term objectives of a subject of the general population (Corruption Perception Index, 2006). (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5387814.stm>).

Elite Theory

Elite theory on the other hand, is concerned with the nature and distribution of power. It was originally developed by Pareto and Mosca (1916). Both Mosca and Pareto saw the rule by elite group as inevitable (even in supposedly *democratic societies) and as such, considered this state of affairs to be desirable effectively "right and proper," that elite groups should dominate the political decision-making process. While Pareto saw political power in terms of a "continuous of elite groups" who rule because of their members' superior intelligence, education, cunning and so forth (that is, their superior personal qualities). Mosca argued that elite groups ruled politically because of their superior organisational ability. In this latter respect, elites come to power because of their superior internal organisation; they take power in the face of the disorganisation of other elites, the general masses of the population and so forth. Both writers saw the general (politically disorganised) masses or the population as being controlled through manipulation and propaganda to serve the interest of the powerful elite.

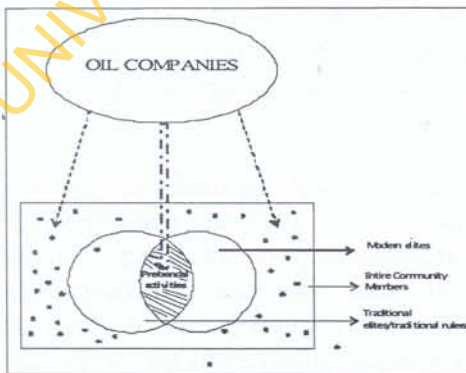


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

NB: The ideas

1. Prebendalism theory
2. Elites Theory of power relations
3. There should be an interaction /or common ground between the two sets of theory
4. The interaction will be the collaboration point between the modern political elites and the traditional leaders.
5. The persons outside the two circles are the commoners/masses who are suffering the double tragedy of the multi-level exploitations

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in oil producing communities of Ilaje, Ondo state, Nigeria with special focus on coastal locations of Ilaje Local Government Area of the state. Ilaje Local Government is bounded by the Ijebus to the West, the Ikale to the North, and the Itsekiri to the East, the Apoi and Arogbo Ijaw to the North East, while Atlantic Ocean formed the Southern boundary. It is situated at 133km south of Akure, the state capital. The area lies between Longitude 4028 and 501 East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 5051 and 6021 north of the equator. It boasts of both onshore and offshore fields, harbouring over fifty oil wells from West to East as: Omuro oil field, Ojumole Oilfield, Opuekaba oil field and Meren oilfield. It co-inhabits by the Mahin Ilaje, Ugbo Ilaje, Aheri and Etikan, sub-groups of Yoruba entity with dynamic and enterprising skill in fishing and mat making.

The study was exploratory and adopted cross sectional survey research design. Combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used in order to obtain indepth knowledge on oil compensation, its agitation processes, payment, politics and conflicts that inherent in compensation agitation and distribution. The quantitative data for this study was based on survey approach with structured questionnaire. Using Lemeshow's model of 95% confidence interval sample size, a threshold of 380 respondents were randomly selected across the thirteen selected communities. For the purpose of survey, the selected thirteen communities were purposively selected based on their geographical location and their experiences on oil exploration and extraction activities. Also considered were their classified spatial differences on core, semi-core, and impacted communities.

The data obtained through the qualitative technique was presented and analyzed using content analysis, and the *Open Code* software package for qualitative data analysis. The closed-ended items were pre-coded in the questionnaire while the open-ended items were coded after retrieval. Analysis of quantitative data was done with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) in simple percentage distribution.

Findings and Discussion

(a) Communities understanding of oil compensation agitation, negotiation and payment

The common contention was the effects of destruction done to the environment, and oil companies are expected to pay compensation. Compensation at uniform rate is paid by oil companies for spillages, where they are not attributed to sabotage. Conflict on oil compensation as reaction however, always erupts as justification by communities, and groups who felt they have been denied of what should have been given. On the understanding of oil compensation made payable to oil producing communities, majority of respondents from study communities (96.7%) responded positively to their awareness and understanding of oil compensation paid to oil communities in the state. On the channels of oil compensation payment to the community, more than half of respondents (55.8%) opined that oil compensation was often through agitation with oil companies, agitation with government (6.7%), argued it through pipeline vandalization (7.3%), through sabotage (7.1%), through rallies and demonstration (5.2%) and through political affiliation (4.2%). While these responses generally demonstrated the politics of compensation, which on what compensation stood for was affected by geo-location. Majority of the respondents from the core communities (80.4%) said that compensation involved benefit, 80% from affected communities submitted that compensation is an entitlement to the affected communities, sixty-six per cent from semi-core said 'it is money for the damage to the environment caused by the oil processing companies', and 47.7% assumed that oil compensation is the money paid for the loss of their land through oil degradation. Findings from FGDs revealed that oil compensation translates to benefits as well as entitlements expected to be paid to all affected communities in the process of oil exploration activities. This compensation is expected by all communities which the oil companies' activities have affected through oil pollution or spillage regardless of its location according to the key informants from the study communities. These positions affirmed the consequence of oil exploration activities in the oil communities in Nigeria as argued by Aworawo (2004), that devastation wrecked on the environment of oil producing communities has remained the major grievance of the people whose livelihood is threatened by oil exploration. In similar vein Human Right Watch (1999) identified the impact of oil spillage on the ecosystem of rural economy such as; damage to soil, crops and the mangrove forest in the host communities as the heat and brightness associated with gas flaring are known to confuse the breeding regime of fish which is not only the source of livelihood of host communities but their food. According to a respondent from Abereke, he explained that:

Oil exploration has done much damage on our water; that we can now see why the coast is becoming difficult to stay. Before this time, our fathers do not need to go far on the sea to get fish, even when we are very young we harvest fish as a training at bay of

water and get enough crabs and fish for household consumption on daily bases, but today the crab is no more there even the fish has move far to the high sea; this is the effect of pollution on our water. (KII/Abereke community/February 2, 2013)

Operationally however, majority (71.2%) of the respondents stated that they have never been involved in agitation for compensation, but that such agitations were done through community representatives, while 28.8% agreed to have participated in the agitation process of the oil politics. Such agitations, the FGD showed, came through four different umbrella bodies of oil associates from different oil blocs of the communities in the study area. They are Association of Ilaje Chevron Concessional Communities (AICECUM), Association of Ilaje Coastal Communities (ASCOPIC), Ilaje Regional Development Committee (IRDC) and Obe-Confederation. These umbrella bodies were formed in recognition of both the oil communities and the oil companies operating in the state and the most popular and active ones as at the time of this study were AICECUM and IRDC, both of which were established and managed by Chevron Nigeria Limited, the major oil producing company in the study area.

According to an informant at Igbokoda:

These bodies negotiate on behalf of their communities as "community representatives". The process begins when individual community were informed to put forward the three names of their representatives through the authority of the community leaders in agreement with their traditional leaders' which would be later ratified by the first class Oba of the Kingdom/Communities. The Olugbo of Ugbo land is known as a paramount traditional leader of all Ugbo Kingdom who will finally forward the name to the State Governor at Akure. Among the communities' representatives, the palace representative is said to be included. (KII/at Igbokoda; February 6, 2013)

Observation showed that, if you are not selected or nominated into these bodies you may not have much to say about the issues on oil compensation negotiation, sharing and distribution and it is at this level of nomination of community representatives or their election that power play and local politics came in. So the dominant response of 97.4% by the respondents on community representatives' selection or nomination could not have been found to be a mistake, but as the major process through which oil compensation agitation and negotiation is being addressed in the recent times within and between the communities. According to a respondent from Igo community in an FGDs session he said:

It is in the process of ratification of names of representatives that power play comes in. At this stage, names are buggled in and buggled out and only those that said to be loyal to the traditional

authority made the list of community representatives because one cannot predict what happens within the palace or at Akure over the ratification of lists of community representatives. (Igo Community/FGDs/March 5, 2013)

The nomination and ratification of community representatives can be related to Ololajulo's findings (2006) that, process of electing or nominating a community representative into council that made negotiation on behalf of oil producing communities could rival any national election. Thus, most times representatives who are not loyal to the king are removed, while those whose tenure has expired in most times are retained as long as they remained loyal to the King. This is related to Joseph's "patron-clients" assertion in his prebendalist theory that:

Individual ruler by dint of personal prestige and power treated ordinary folk as extensions of the big man's household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. Authority is entirely personalized, shaped by the ruler's preferences rather than any codified system of laws. The ruler ensures the political stability of the regime and personal political survival by providing a zone of security in an uncertain environment and by selectively distributing favours and materials benefit to loyal followers who are not citizens of polity so much as ruler clients. (Joseph, 1996)

ASCOPIC, AICECUM and IRDC according to the findings, are oil bodies established by Chevron Nigeria Ltd, the major oil producing company in the state, while Obe Confederation is jointly formed by Conoil and Cavendish Oil with some communities as their host communities. AICECUM as an acronym is made up of what is described as member of "Ilaje Coastal communities" with different spatial identities to be identified as groups or *blocs* of communities coming up as a nomadism as actual communities, indigenous, concessional, eight united, core communities, ultimate and major communities (Adunni, 2013). It was reported that AICECUM came as a replacement to the failure of ASCOPIC earlier formed by the conglomerate of oil companies in the study area which included oil companies as Chevron, Conoil and Cavendish.

ASCOPIC as an acronym means "Association of Ilaje Central Oil Producing Communities". It handles issues on compensation especially on offshore from Abetobo among other communities as Abetobo Zion, Idogun, Ehinmore Zion, Ehinmore Idogun, Ayadi, Idogun Nla, Lepe, Ogboti, Womiteren Ojabineni, Yaye, Olotu Niye, Olotu Zion, Olotu Yara, Olotu Kuwo, Okunipin, Eruwa Ero, Eruwa Isale, Idiogba, Aiyetoro, Idiogba Oke, Zion Alugba, Ugbo Oke, Alagbon, Alagbon Oke, Modibo, Omosehin, Orotu, Asumaga, Bijimi, Ilowo Otumara, Otumara Okun, Ago Olori Alufa, Orioke Harama, Ilowo Ogunsemore, Ilowo Aiyetoro, Ilowo Saheyi, Ilowo Ogunfemi,

Ilowo Zion, Ilowo Nla, Ilowo Akingboye, Ilowo Atomore, Ilepete, Ofedegbe, and Ilepete Bamigbose.

The community representatives formed as agitators or team according to the FGDs are said to be devious, charlatan and therefore, represent the system that is a corrupt one, where the crooks take the best at the detriment of communities. According to a respondent:

While the communities are living in anguish poverty, these representatives cruise heavy Jeeps all around communities whenever they come home at month end, and in festive period. The idiots and charlatans are deriving joy in galvanizing on the lives of others by promoting personal aggrandizement which has led to their ill-gotten wealth. They are loyal to the cause of their wealth and disloyal to their communities. (IDI/Obe-Rewoye Community/September, 12, 2013)

Such committee nominees have equally remained loyal to the power that created them, the- Paramount traditional leader of *Ugbo* Kingdom; and therefore, *Olugbo* often use his authoritative power to favour them. The system therefore was seen to be bad since the benefit of oil has not trickled-down to the generality of the community members, especially at the grassroots. Furthermore, it was revealed that these bodies and community representatives signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), most times, on behalf of their communities with oil companies, and the arrangement on MoU is in tripartite form where Oil Company comes as party A, Ondo State Government as party B; with individuals' community acts as party C. The MoU as established in AICECUM yearly stated inter-alia:

Company shall provide a negotiation package/signing fee of Naira to community, within one month of the signing and implementation of this MOU and that community executive shall inform all community workers, elders, women, youths of the details of this MOU so as to avoid confusion and misinformation.

Specifically, Chevron Nigeria Limited has engaged its community stakeholders in two main ways- Memorandum of Understanding drawn between it and individual communities and through the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) framework. It was introduced and developed in 2005 to guide its relationship with communities assembled within a cluster system. This attempt was a desire to participate in community affairs by making partnerlistic charitable contribution that benefits a targeted group, and at the same time creates a positive impression in recipients and observers critics alike. In a short note, engagements under the MoU framework produced social investments in the form of philanthropic grants for cultural projects where community groups are passive recipients. MoU usually have like provision on job opportunities for the indigenes of communities, contracts

awards to community members, procedure for resolving grievances and the like. It intended to ensure capacity building, community empowerment and supports the use of local contractors in the execution of projects (localization of local content) (Extract from IRDC, Annual report, 2012).

However, the GmoU nevertheless was found to have been the initiatives of oil companies while the community and representatives who are signatories to it at times signed what they know little about. In addition, we found from the study that majority of inhabitants especially women are excluded from the signing of MoU as well as in the communities' representative team.

(b) Oil communities, conflicts and politics of compensatory schemes and funds

Oil companies had been blamed for their dual identity in their attempt to pay oil compensation as oil operation in host communities on the basis siting of drilling activities. Aworawo (2004) in his discussion about onshore/offshore stated that the dichotomy on onshore/offshore has greatly favoured the oil companies and even yielded pulp results especially when it becomes abundantly clear that there would be more dividends from the federal government following the promulgation of the onshore/offshore oil resources Decree in 1971. So while the communities with oil well try to claim more benefits from oil compensation in physical cash or through allocation of compensatory schemes, award of contract and other social projects; other communities revolted. A respondent from Aiyetoro, who resided in Molutehin community said:

We are under compensated because we have not been opportune to have our indigene as Chairman of any juice position of any of those bodies that decide on negotiation for oil compensation. Most time, Chairmanship like other juice positions both in the government agencies and oil associates like AICECUM, IRDC, NDDC and ASCOPIC are held by indigenes of so-called core communities. With this, accesses to most of these infrastructures become so difficult and as a result most are appropriated by these communities' representatives. It is a matter of who dictate the pipe taste the tune. (Molutehin community/September 22, 2013)

The problem associated with the appointment of board of management of some of the government agencies including compensation oil umbrella bodies, which manage compensation, was said to have something to do with Nigerian government policy and which affected the allocation of compensatory schemes and funds. The indigene and non-indigene policy dichotomy according to Dibua (2005) surprisingly enjoyed constitutional backing. For example, the Law and Act that established most of the developmental commissions such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), as well as Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Ondo State

Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), as found in the study area have it designed that the board members of the commission must be indigenes of *oil producing communities* which operationally excludes some groups and their communities within the coastal communities particularly the impacted communities.

Thus, the Ugbo Ilaje communities having been named as “oil producing communities” and have proceeded to appropriate the benefits of resources found naturally and abundantly deposited in their communities to the neglect of the affected communities. Similarly, is the demand by some communities within Ugbo Ilaje today, who seem to have the larger numbers of oil wells cited on their lands and therefore demand for larger share of compensation. This has aggravated to rivalry, conflict and demands for the positions as headship of these agencies and oil bodies, at the same time posture to get large share of whatever that comes as schemes and funds from oil compensation between and within the communities. This has aggravated to compensation and compensatory rivalry as exemplified by Awoye and Molutehin who have gotten more of compensatory schemes.

Furthermore, discussions, records and observations showed that there have been inter-community invasions that often disrupted Chevron operations at operation facilities with attendant counter-invasions often lasting several hours before being brought under control (*Guardian*, April 15, 2013). Similarly, contestations for standing committees’ leadership often become overtly violent even where they are tagged ‘peaceful protest. For example a respondent and one of community representative in IRDC from Mese community said:

There is arrogance in those who call themselves indigenes of core producing communities, that claimed the ownership of everything, even the oil platform in their communities; the leadership of IRDC, and therefore arrogates everything to themselves. Honestly, there is already politics within the so-called oil producing communities as regards Ugbo communities. We have not recognized Jackson as Chairman of IRDC though, he has since been parading himself as Chairman, and his chairmanship remains a kangaroo. (FGD/Mese/May 22, 2013)

Responses to the question on the fairness of oil compensatory schemes, more than half of the respondents (63.3%) stated that there have been occasions when their communities felt unfairly treated, while 36.7% responded otherwise. In spite of the recorded cases of open altercations, respondents are wont to denials of invasions as they generally claimed: ‘an average Ilaje man from either Ugbo communities or Mahin communities is a peaceful man and can only be tempted to fight if he is pushed to the wall’ and this historical peaceful nature before 1998 oil conflict was linked to their authentic communal lifestyle; where some houses have no doors, and where beds were shared. According to a key informant he said that:

We do not beg for oil compensation because our fishing expedition makes us sufficient. We believe that ocean is not a barren entity; even if it's affected, there is no element of paucity of fishing in ocean. No matter how the tide, after the tidal, come calmness; the calmness now propels the fishermen for their fishing expeditions either in the local or modern form. (KII/Igbokoda/September 3, 2013)

But another respondent saw it in a different way, according to the respondent at Ogororo he said;

We have felt cheated, discouraged and marginalized times without number when you want to rate the disparity on compensatory schemes and funds, and that we do not fight ourselves do not mean we are cowards. We are astonished with what is happening most especially, the politics and oil dichotomy that has favour our brother in Ugbo Kingdom, but we still believe in our ancestral history as the blood that ties us together therefore, we remain calm even when there have been cause for conflict. (IDI/Ogororo/May 22, 2013)

Another respondent from Araromi and Key informant from Mahin Kingdom said:

We do not fight ourselves because we believe the issues on oil dichotomy as oil producing communities, onshore; offshore dichotomy has not come into being by the making of our brothers, but policy and the tactics from government and oil companies. The offshore favour them because their water is shallow in Ugbo Kingdom and very easy to get oil before 200 nautical shore miles compare to muddy water we have in Mahin Kingdom that with 30 kilometer miles we are already in ocean. (KII/26 May, 2013)

The people therefore saw the act of division within them as caused by the government and Oil Companies. On the part of government, people referred to oil dichotomy as onshore/offshore policy that favours part of communities at the expense of others, and on the part of Oil Companies, reference were made to dual identity as oil producing and non oil producing communities as a divide and rule tactics used by oil companies to pay Paul and rob Peters of which continue to put them apart.

Issue of transparency which is one of the objectives of oil bodies was reported absent in the handling of scholarship and other compensatory funds. According to a key informant from Odofado, he said that:

Most times scholarships as well as jobs allocation from Chevron were sold to strangers like Ikale, Isoko and Itshekiri; people who have nothing to do with oil exploration in the state. But

communities representative do all these to make their ill wealth out of the commonwealth. (IDI/May 12, 2013)

Generally, respondents argued that the five key objectives of IRDC as participatory partnership, transparency, accountability, sustainable development, conflict resolution litigation, continual maturity evaluation which are hallmark for the establishment were all absent in the performance of the body that disbursed and allocate compensatory schemes. Submissions such as this and other related conflict and violence experiences become reinforced, and make relevant the framework that guided this study. Field experiences point to further conflict in the nearest future because the blood ties as brotherhood of oneness Ilaje solidarity either between Mahin communities or within Ugbo oil producing communities had already dwindled. There is already weaken social cohesion among the groups of communities as communities have become balkanised into different identities and mostly this fragmentation as mid-wife by the traditional leaders and political elites. For example, in most times, in issue of nomination and ratification of community representative, representatives who are not loyal to the king are removed, while those whose tenures had expired were retained as long as they remained loyal to the King. This is in congruence with Joseph's "patron-clients" assertion in prebendalist theory that:

Individual ruler by dint of personal prestige and power treated ordinary folk as extensions of the big man's household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. Authority is entirely personalised, shaped by the ruler's preferences rather than any codified system of laws. The rulers ensure the political stability of the regime and personal political survival by providing a zone of security in an uncertain environment and by selectively distributing favours and materials benefit to loyal followers who are not citizens of polity so much as ruler clients. (Joseph, 1996)

Both the political elite and the traditional leaders are today in control of the affairs of the communities. They decide what they want, what comes to the communities, who is entitling to it and how to be shared. The negotiation for oil compensation is like the destiny of the local communities is being placed in the hands of the traditional rulers and the political elite through the signing of MoU. What is discovered is no more considered as politics, but corruption between the local political elite and the traditional leaders. The claim by some communities as major oil producers, as major owners of oil wells, and attempts to get more of what comes from oil compensation is not only seen as disadvantage to others who suffer the consequences of oil activities, but a seed of discord that is gathering momentum for conflict at large. The conflict as observed is growing fast, however it is no more between the Ijaw and the Mahin Ilaje, but within the UgboIlaje Ilaje communities themselves; as intra

conflict over the share and the distribution of the compensation and compensatory projects.

Conclusion

The study examined the local politics and conflicts arising from oil compensation agitation and distribution in the oil producing community of Ilaje, Ondo State. Basically, it was shown that access to power and other schemes and funds purported for the development of oil producing communities under the subject matter were disbursed, allocated and concentrated in the selected communities and few groups based on their communities' identity. This created a politics driven lopsided trickling down effect driven by patron-client relationship and pathway with the end product of greater poverty in the midst of plenty. It has in turn created a rat race where very few persons use the opportunity to protect their interests and that of their kinsmen as an answer to the patron-client assertion by Joseph in his prebendalism theory. We call for an immediate solution from Nigerian government and suggest a need for a restructuring of the process of oil compensation payment and distribution in order to nip the imminent conflict in the bud. There is a need for peace making structures in the region to avoid the degeneration of the little of the brotherhood that is still in existence. Stakeholders in Ondo State oil producing communities like other oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, Nigeria, should see oil deposits in their area as a joint depot for sustainability and equity; a natural blessing and a pool of commonwealth that should be used for common benefit.

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