

FUELLING DISCORD



OIL AND CONFLICT IN THREE NIGER DELTA COMMUNITIES



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INTEGRATED CENTRE

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Social Development Integrated Centre

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAST – Community and Shell Together

ERA – Environmental Rights Action

LGA - Local Government Area

MOPOL – Mobile Police

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NDPR – Niger Delta Petroleum Resources

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NLNG – Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas

NNPC – Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation

OSF – Ogoni Solidarity Forum

PDP – Peoples Democratic Party

WEF – World Economic Forum

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SUMMARY

There is an alarming increase in the incidences of communal conflicts in the petroleum bearing Niger Delta area. These conflicts, which very often manifest in full-blown wars within and between communities, have resulted in the killing of numerous community members and the destruction of whole villages and towns. At the root of these conflicts is the manner of oil and gas exploitation and policies of the government and oil and gas companies in security contracting, 'surveillance', execution of 'community development' projects etc. The responses of government and industry agents to community agitation and protests have been designed to silence or weaken opposition by manipulating filial ties to create divisions among community members.

Decades of impoverishment of the local people, destruction of their sources of livelihood, pollution of their environment through oil spillages and endless gas flaring, joblessness and neglect of the community by the oil companies and government among others, worked as catalysts for conflict. As communities impacted by petroleum exploitation seek ways of redress, different manifestations of conflicts are being experienced. This report examined the evolution of three cases to explain the remote and immediate causes of communal crises in oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta area.

Almost two decades after Shell was forced out of Ogoniland following community protests and international outrage over state sponsored murders, the company and the government are working in concert with some influential Ogoni leaders to perfect plans to bring back oil drilling and production companies. However, some community members continue to demand state action to address the demands of the people as contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights. Skirmishes have already been reported between and within communities as tensions mount over government and oil company plans to restart oil production activities without addressing the fundamental demands of the Ogoni people.

In Rumuekpe, we discovered that although the immediate cause of the conflicts was leadership tussles in the youth association, the crisis, which led to the loss of human lives and massive population displacement was an oil war widely believed to have the support of some Shell and government officials. Chieftaincy dimensions were introduced into the crisis when powerful community members with ties to companies and government imposed their will on the rest and in contradiction to traditional institutions. Also, issue of conflicts over traditional ownership of the land are factors behind violent conflicts.

Ikarama is another example of oil producing communities on the brink. Here government has turned a blind eye as a major company and its agents act in ways that may result in a breakdown in community order. There is evidence of divide and rule tactics of oil companies, including through the practices of Shell's CAST (Community And Shell Together) in Ikarama. Pipeline surveillance contracts are awarded in such a way that threaten the peace, as families

that make up Ikarama have been set against one another: a situation that may lead to full blown war if urgent steps are not taken to address issues of loss of livelihoods and diffuse the tensions. The discovery and exploitation of oil in Ikarama is fast turning into a curse as in other oil producing community in the Niger Delta. Oil companies operating in Ikarama, especially Shell, have fuelled conflicts within the community by ‘consulting’ and making payments to its preferred community chiefs and families that they have recognized as ‘host’. They operate a policy of selecting the most influential and vocal members of the community for ‘settlement’ by making ex-gratia payments. In what has become routine practice, oil companies also pay vocal and influential youth groups ‘stay at home’ or ‘standby’ money.

Oil pollution and its crude method of clean up has often resulted in massive devastation of farmlands, forest, rivers, destruction of livelihoods and communal properties.

There are reports of constant use of state security personnel by oil companies to harass and intimidate disenchanted community people.

In all the communities studied, desperate politicians have turned a large number of idle youths into political thugs that they deploy for the purpose securing victories in elections that are fraught with violence and outright rigging.

The conditions which led to the implosion of Rumuekpe exist in many other communities in the oil rich Niger Delta region, making the region a time bomb. Unfortunately, the oil companies, as we observed, seem to be more comfortable when their host communities are at war, as government gives them military protection to carry out their oil extraction activities.

Recommendations

General:

There is urgent need for action on the part of government and citizens organizations to resolve pending issues of ‘self-determination’ and ‘resource control’. Government responses should involve serious consideration of popular demands as contained in documents such as the Ogoni Bill of Rights, Kaiama Declaration, Ikwerre Rescue Charter etc.

A recognition of community ownership of land and right to approve all oil contracts and mining leases would go a long way in guaranteeing protection of the environment and community livelihoods.

There is need for fundamental restructuring of the local government system in a way that reconciles systems of community governance with the Local Government Areas (LGA) councils. Elected community leaderships such as Community Development Committees (CDCs) should

have full representation in local government councils. Chairmanship of LGAs should rotate among different communities.

Since communal crises are exacerbated by the absence of legitimate political representation, restructuring of local government should be done in parallel with a reform of the electoral system to guarantee suffrage and prevent the hijacking of political offices by a small group of powerful election riggers.

The restructuring of local governance and major electoral reforms would assist communities and citizens to assert their rights and ensure that revenues from oil and gas exploitation are utilized for the benefit of communities.

To the Government:

- Government should strengthen legislation, regulation, enforcement and monitoring capacity to protect the natural environment and community rights and livelihoods. Oil and gas companies and their contractors should be made to abide by international standards –economic, social and technological - in carrying out their oil operations in the Niger Delta.
- Government should desist from deploying soldiers and other armed security personnel against oil bearing communities to prevent the occurrence of massacres, as experienced in Umuechem, Ogoni, Odi and Remuekpe etc.
- Government should stop the constant violent suppression of peaceful community resistance.
- Government should commission an open and independent audit of oil and gas operations to determine damages of community livelihoods towards paying reparations and compensations.
- In areas affected by violence, government should identify victims and send relief materials to the displaced members of the community now living as refugees in other parts of the state and outside the state and assist reconciliation efforts of NGOs. Government should also support the rebuilding of destroyed communities and settlements.
- Government should set up an independent commission to probe the immediate and remote causes of violence with view to bringing to book those who instigated and sponsored the violence that has led to loss of lives and property.

To Civil Society:

- Civil society groups must continue to challenge the mismanagement of the huge earnings from the oil and gas industry.
- Civil society groups should continue to work in concert with community people to ensure that government budgets and revenues from natural resources work for the citizens.

- Civil society groups should partner with community people on a peaceful and legal resistance to human and environmental rights abuses by the oil companies and the state.
- Groups should continue to mount pressures on the oil companies and the government to ensure that international standards are maintained in oil activities in the communities, and other Niger Delta Communities.
- Civil society groups should insist on the probe of the oil companies as well as the government, especially the past governments of Rivers and Bayelsa states, the federal government led by General Obasanjo Obasanjo and the past Emohua Local Government Council, for the destruction of communities and the massacre of community members.
- Mount pressures on both Governments at all levels and the oil companies to respect the rights of the people and the laws of the land, including environmental laws.
- Participate in campaigning for the rebuilding of destroyed communities, payment of reparations, end to gas flaring and the clean-up of the polluted environment.

The Community People:

- Community members should avoid divisive traps to organize and resist all manner of environmental and human rights abuses by the state and oil companies.
- They should resist violence and any attempt by oil companies and government to cause division among the people and create conflict within communities.
- Partner with civil society organizations to seek redress for atrocities committed against them by oil companies and government.

To oil companies:

- Oil companies should discontinue secret monetary payments to individuals and groups. All monetary transfers should be made to the knowledge of all community members.
- Companies should stop inciting sections of the community against the others through the use of divide and rule methods in surveillance contracting and payments to youth groups.
- Oil companies should not operate in communities with armed security personnel, as such results in intimidation and abuses of community members, while fuelling anger against the state and industry.
- Oil companies should suspend operations in the communities in crisis until Memorandum of Understanding jointly produced with the community members is put in place and commitments made towards abiding by the terms and provisions.
- To overhaul their equipment to forestall the frequent occurrence of oil spillages which have caused havoc on the environment of the community

INTRODUCTION

“We were living in peace before Shell came. We were sharing our forests with animals and monkeys, but when Shell came, they started setting one community against another. ..before you knew it, they started killing our people”.

-Pa Jim Beeson Saro-Wiwa, father of Ken Saro-Wiwaⁱ

Although the observation was made with respect to Ogoniland, the statement holds true for virtually all Niger Delta communities where oil is being extracted by transnational oil companies and their local counterparts and collaborators. Many communities in the oil producing region, which were known to have been peaceful prior to the commencement of oil activities in their areas have been devastated as a result of oil wars.

On 30th November 1990, impoverished members of Umuechem community in the Etche Local Government Area of Rivers state were embarking on a peaceful protest against Shell. The community members were demanding for better environment practices and compensation for oil spills and destruction of farmlands. Shell and the Nigerian government responded by sending the dreaded MOPOL who murdered over eighty community people-mostly women, children and the elderly.

Every community has its own sad and pathetic stories to tell: stories of violence occasioned by accumulated anger due to decades of neglect, exclusion from the benefits of the oil found under their soil, devastation of their environment and divide and ruin strategy among others. The stories of Rumuekpe and Ikarama, communities of farmers and fishers in Rivers and Bayelsa States, are in no way different from that of the Ogonis or other parts of the Niger Delta where oil violence has been witnessed. Like Umuechem, Ogoni, Odioma, Edagberi etc. Rumuekpe was a very peaceful and happy community before oil companies arrived the place in search of the ‘black gold’ deposited by nature under the soil. With the advent of the oil companies-Shell, Total, Elf, Agip, Chevron, ExxonMobil etc. the story of Niger Delta communities gradually changed as their expectations from the companies became a mirage. Hope was replaced by hopelessness and anger as a result of irresponsible methods of operations of the oil companies. The people have been impoverished, sources of livelihood destroyed, youths are unemployed and turned to political thugs by desperate politicians, and the people have been subjected to penurious existence despite huge revenues from oil and gas being pumped from their land.

Nigeria is among the major petroleum exporters in the world. The transnational oil companies which are responsible to their shareholders in Europe, North America and Asia operates under joint ventures and other agreements with the Nigerian government and earn huge revenues from oil and gas exports. However, in fifty years of increasing oil and gas production and amidst growing exports and huge revenues to national, state and local governments, poverty levels in the country have been increasing while social infrastructures collapse. In the absence

of a strong democratic culture, proceeds from these resources are widely plundered by unaccountable leaderships that enjoy immunity from prosecution for corruption and associated crimes of spoliation.

Although the actual volume of oil produced and exported by Nigeria may not be known as a result of the unbridled corruption in the oil sector and lack of institutional skills and capacities to enforce standards of oil-field practice, there are some estimates. For instance, in 2006, the Nigerian government estimated it was earning about \$36 billion each year from the extensive petroleum industry.ⁱⁱ Other estimates put annual earnings at over \$45 billion.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2007 and 2008, Nigerian governments at the federal, state and local government levels received increased revenues as a result of record increases in global price of crude oil and natural gas. In 2008, crude oil price averaged \$97 per barrel.^{iv} During the year, the price reached a peak of about \$150 per barrel. At average production of 2 million barrels per day, proceeds from Nigerian crude oil exports would have been over \$70 billion. And this does not include Liquefied Natural Gas exports.

New governments that were sworn in at the different tiers of government after flawed elections in 2007 and 2008 had the opportunity, with larger government coffers, to improve on delivery of development programmes. In 2008, the government of Rivers State alone expended ₦367 billion (over \$3 billion).^v Other states in the Niger Delta recorded similar expenditures, which does not include the budgets of the local government councils. But a disconnection with the citizens due to near total elimination of suffrage meant that government budgeting were carried out without much reference to supposed beneficiaries. Inadequate implementation of budgets and routine looting of public funds by political office holders and some well placed civil servants continue.

In 2007 Shell's net profit rose to \$11.56 billion from \$8.67 billion a year earlier. According to reports, Exxon, the world's largest privately-owned oil company, reported a 14% rise in income to a record \$11.68 billion, which was adjudged the largest ever for a US corporation. In the first quarter of 2008, Exxon made nearly \$90,000 profit a minute!^{vi} Oil bearing communities in places like the Niger Delta have borne the real costs that allow for such huge profits.

From the examples of Ogoni, where Shell and the government is seeking a return of oil drilling, to Rumuekpe, which has been destroyed as oil companies pitch community members in wars against one another, we are presenting stories of the Niger Delta Communities that have suffered dislocation. We also present the story of Ikarama as an example of hundreds of Niger Delta communities that are on the verge of implosion over oil neglect and selective payments by oil companies. We show how oil companies, security agencies, local contractors, local government and state government officials are complicit in fuelling conflicts in oil bearing communities.

In the past 5 years, Rumuekpe has remained a war zone which has turned it into a near extinct community. Today, the once vibrant community has been overtaken by thick bushes and as a

result of years of abandonment as villagers fled from ferocious wars that left the community totally destroyed. The war started with a minor disagreement among youths over who should control the youth association that had become very powerful due to oil companies' patronage. And like a wildfire, it engulfed the entire community of 8 villages. Most of the houses including school buildings, churches, shrines, etc. were burnt down. Over a hundred people were killed, many of whom are still in the mortuaries awaiting burial. While the guns were booming, oil companies, protected by heavily armed soldiers, were busy sucking oil from the troubled land. This report examines this and similar crises and issues that spur them.



An oil well in the Niger Delta.

Picture by Ed Kashi

OGONI

To drill or to keep oil under?

The Ogonis are an ethnic nation with a population of over five hundred thousand. Currently, the Ogoni occupy Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria, and speak the Khana language with slight variations in dialects.

Oil in commercial quantity was discovered in Ogoni by Shell in 1958. Since then, the Anglo-Dutch oil company has drilled 96 oil wells from five oil fields. Crude oil drilling and associated gas flaring was carried out twenty-four hours a day in close proximity to human habitation. This was until 1993 when Shell was sacked from Ogoniland by community resistance. In the Ogoni area and surrounding neighbourhoods, government had build a huge fertilizer producing plant, two oil refineries, a petrol-chemical plant and a very busy sea-port. Some of the factories have been privatised by government.



Oil installations like this one have polluted farmlands in Ogoni

In 1990, the Ogoni took stock of their condition and concluded that in spite of the stupendous oil and gas wealth off their land, which has fed the Nigerian ruling elite; they were extremely poor, and had no social amenities. Unemployment was running higher and worse still, their environment was severely devastated by three decades of reckless oil exploitation, or what the Ogoni call “Shell’s Ecological Warfare”. The Ogoni felt that their existence as a nation was threatened by environmental degradation, political marginalization, economic strangulation and “slavery”. They went further to adopt the OGONI BILL OF RIGHTS, which was presented to the Government and people of Nigeria in October 1990. It is as a result of the Nigerian government’s insensitivity to their demands that Shell was sacked from Ogoniland on 4th January, 1993.

These Ogoni agitations were pursued non-violently by community members until 21st May 1994 when four Ogoni leaders were murdered in a stage-managed violence that has the trade mark of then Abacha military dictatorship. This singular event was to change the face of the Ogoni struggle as the Rivers State and Federal Government of Nigeria brought in the military that Massacred Ogoni people in their thousands, raped their woman, and destroyed their properties, schools, markets and communities.

Following from the killings of the four Ogoni leaders, the Government of Nigeria arrested and tried the remaining Ogoni leaders including Ken Saro-Wiwa for the murders. The military tribunal that tried them eventually sentenced them to death by hanging in October 1995. Nine (of them including Ken Saro-Wiwa, were consequently hanged on 10 November 1995, barely ten days after they were convicted. This was despite the outcry by the International Community, and the fact that the specified thirty days to appeal was yet to expire.

Since 1993 when Shell stopped operation in Ogoni, no definite statement was made concerning their final exit until Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria announced on June 8, 2008 in far away South Africa that Shell’s licence to exploit oil in Ogoniland has been withdrawn.

According to Alhaji Yar’Adua who was in South Africa to attend African chapter of the World Economic Forum (WEF) which held between 5th and 6th of June, 2008,

“There is a total loss of confidence between Shell and the Ogoni people, another operator acceptable to the Ogonis will take over, since nobody is gaining from the conflict and stalemate. This is the best solution”

However, the Ogoni struggle still remains an unanswered question in the context of Nigerian politics. None of the deceitful attempts so far made by the Nigerian state to reconcile Ogoni people and Shell in order to resolve all disputes between them and take the oil under their land, has been able to pacify the Ogoni. Under the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigerian government tried to manoeuvre a resumption of oil exploitation by Shell. Sadly, these

efforts could not address the issue of state murders nor meet the demands of the Ogoni people as encapsulated in The Ogoni Bill of Rights (see appendix 1).

Recent developments and pronouncements indicate that the federal government of Nigeria has concluded plans to facilitate the return of Shell to Ogoniland. According to the Ogoni Solidarity Forum (OSF), this government intends to achieve this through the “back door and in a very bizarre manner” by appointing them as a “silent partner” to the NNPC in oil exploration resumption plans.

On the 4th January, 2009, thugs destroyed canopies and public address system erected by the OSF in Bori ahead of a planned rally to commemorate Ogoni Day and draw attention to the Ogoni Bill of Rights. Some of the thugs were identified as individuals close to the local leadership of the ruling PDP.

On 18th February, 2009, over seventy community representatives, youths, women and civil society actors from different ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta participated in a summit to discuss the attempt by the Yar’adua regime and their collaborators to effect a forceful resumption of oil operations of in Ogoniland. The meeting discussed the tendency of the Yar’Adua regime and Shell to create confusion within communities by bribing certain individuals with contracts and oil concessions rather than address the issues that have been raised by whole communities in the struggle for self-determination and justice.

The summary of the outcome of this meeting, which was hosted by the OSF with support from Social Action and Environmental Rights Action, was that “Shell remains before the Ogoni people, a persona non grata!” And so do other oil companies until their legitimate demands (as contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights) are addressed.

RUMUEKPE

Once upon a town

Rumuekpe is an Ikwerre community in Emohua LGA of Rivers State, Niger Delta region of Southern Nigeria. It is made up of eight villages - Rumuegwu, Omoviri, Mgbodo, Ovelle-Odouha, Mgbuhie, Ekwutche, Imogu and Ovelle. Rumuekpe is a community of about fifteen thousand people. Oil explorations started in Rumuekpe during British colonial rule in the late 1950s by Shell, and then others followed. Today, five major oil companies operating in the area include Shell Petroleum Development Company, Eni's Nigeria Agip Oil Company, Total E&P and Niger Delta Petroleum Resources (NDPR).

In Rumuekpe, like in other Niger Delta communities, decisions concerning the administration of the community are taken by the men. It used to be that the traditional ruler is the eldest man in the community. The traditional ruler, with the assistances of council of elders and *Owhor* holders will in turn coronate the 'Royal Highness' in the community. The Royal Highness is the communal political stool recognised by the government.

Traditionally, the people of the town, like other Ikwerre are predominantly farmers and fishers. The people are also involved in trading. Although, abundantly endowed with oil and gas resources, Rumuekpe was underdeveloped and lacking in social amenities. For a long time after oil wells and gas flares became part of the landscape, the people went on with their communal activities rich in cultural practices, including burial rites, marriages, music and dance. .

Complain and be damned: the conflict

Since the commencement of commercial production of crude oil and the building of flowstations, pipelines, manifolds etc. companies operating in Rumuekpe, chief among which is Shell, would prefer a situation whereby community members maintained sealed lips in the face of rabid demolition of the environment resulting from reckless modes of operations. Attempts at complaining have been met with the visitation of trigger happy security operatives on the payroll of the oil companies.

On 15th July 2003, truck loads of stern looking and heavily armed Mobile Policemen (MOPOL) from Port Harcourt stormed Imogu village, one of the eight villages that make up Rumuekpe and terrorised the community. The MOPOL were led by a team of Shell workers. On arrival, they took over all corners of the village, shooting and shouting and singing war songs. While the guns were booming, Shell workers were struggling to fix their facility which broke down, resulting to a major oil spillage that devastated the environment. A 75 year old woman, Mrs. Nwine Nwondi was a direct victim of the MOPOL. While running to escape the angry MOPOL, they kept pursuing and beating her, until she collapsed and fell into coma before they abandoned her. She was later taken to a herbal home by villagers where she was revived.^{vii}



Rumuekpe women protest oil violence.

Picture by Humphrey Nsirim

The problem had started in 9th July 2003 when a major oil spill occurred from a section of the Rumuekpe-Adebawa pipeline belonging to Shell. The spillage pumped large quantities of crude oil into the land, river and creeks of the community, causing havoc to the people. Their only source of water was polluted while farmlands with crops, as well as economic trees and aquatic lives were destroyed by the spill. On the 10th of July, Shell came to the village with seven armed MOPOL to fix the broken pipe. But there was a disagreement as the company was only interested in fixing the facility and going back to production, while the people insisted that there should be cleanup of the area messed up by the spill. Shell left only to return the next day with about fifteen armed MOPOL who shot sporadically into the air on arrival. But on 11th July, the villagers mobilised and occupied the Shell facility insisting on the spill being cleaned. It is this protest that attracted the truck loads of over fifty trigger-happy security operatives to deal with the members of the community.

Oil spills

Before the 2003 blowout, Rumuekpe had experienced several oil spillages which polluted the environment and worsened the living conditions of the local people. The spills provided an opportunity for the oil companies to use armed security operatives to silence the people. Although Shell always claim that the spillages were acts of sabotage, it is often difficult for the companies to absolve themselves from pollution. Quite often, claims of sabotage cannot be sustained. Most of the facilities in the community, just like in other parts of the Niger Delta have become very old and corroded and frequently give way to the elements. As far back as 1978, the Rumuekpe-Adebawa pipeline ruptured. Shell paid little monetary compensation, but left the mess uncleaned.

Other spills occurred in 1994 and 2001 close to the spot of the 1978 rupture. Shell refused to pay compensation and clean the spills.



Rumuekpe environment is devastated by oil pollution

Polluting the atmosphere

While the land, water and creeks of Rumuekpe, like other parts of the oil rich Niger Delta, are being devastated by oil spillages, which the oil companies have failed to clean up, the air has been subjected to its own share of the ecological degradation as a result of routine flaring of

associated gas. In Rumuekpe, the 'flame of hell' burns at the ground level. Children often gather near these flames to have fun and feed their eyes with what they may consider to be amazing since the huge fire continue to burn day and night. Little do they know that by assembling near the flames, they increase the chances of having their health destroyed by dangerous chemicals being pumped into the atmosphere.

Oilfields in the Niger Delta region, including Rumuekpe, contain large quantity of gas mixed with crude oil. Some even contain more gas than oil^{viii}. In the process of extracting the oil, the 'associated gas' comes out. Such flared gas also contain large amount of methane and carbon dioxide which are major contributors to ozone layer depletion. Gas flaring over the years is said to have led to noise pollution, steady temperature rise, acid rain, corrosion of roofs and respiratory diseases among many other health problems.



Shell's gas flare at Rumuekpe

Oil trouble

Until its final destruction, Rumuekpe, said to be a gathering point of pipelines through which gas is transferred to the Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in Bonny has remained grossly under developed. There were no roads, except the access roads leading to the facilities of the oil companies operating in the area. When oil companies built 'community development' projects like water boreholes, they awarded contracts and made payments in ways that pitched some villages against the others. And such projects did not come without serious agitations. In 1992, the community registered their grievances by obstructing Willbross, (a major Shell contractor) from laying pipes across vast area of communal farmlands. This action earned the community the ire of shell and its government collaborators. Soldiers from Bori Camp (2nd Amphibious Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt) were drafted into the community to shoot and kill. Villagers were carted into detention and tortured. It took the intervention of Mr. Ndamati Lawson and some prominent Ikwerres to save the community from extermination.^{ix} Mr. Lawson was then an adviser to the Military Administrator Rivers State on Petroleum Matters.

In 1999, following the agitations for which the community was threatened with extermination, water boreholes were provided to three of the villages that make up Rumuekpe. The villages include Ekwutche, Imogu and Ovelle. The other five villages were left grumbling and suspecting the favoured three as having conspired against them to deny them the benefit. The five villages include Rumuegwu, Omoviri, Mgbodo, Ovelle-Odouha and Mgbuhie. And in 2000, electricity project was commenced in the three villages, again ignoring the other five. That further deepened the suspicion and hatred between the two groups.

The people of the community were so disenchanted with cohabiting with oil companies that they attempted to stop NDPR from entering their land in 2004. The oil company had applied for grant of a licence to enter into and take possession of a strip of land for laying of pipelines.^x Opposing this application, Rumuegwa village had cited experiences with Shell in forty years of oil operations in their community. In a letter dated 10th September 2004 and signed by three of the community leaders, the community wrote: "we wish to remind the government on our experience we had received from Shell which had operated the community for the past 40 years without MOU and proper acquisition of our land". Tension continued to mount in Rumuekpe over the penurious conditions of the people in the midst of oil wealth, until it started boiling over.

Tensions within the community were linked with the kind of relationship that the oil companies maintained with selected community members that the companies use as 'community liaison officer'. These individuals are perceived by other community members as obstructing attempts to address grievances. Related is the issue of chieftaincy struggle which also borders around who will have easier access to the company payments. Those opportune to ascend the throne tended to disregard tradition and built a system of command in conflict with traditional leadership structures. Though companies often witness signs of such misappropriations of the community's rights and privileges, they continued to use payments and security contracts to strengthen such elements. In Rumuekpe, as elsewhere in the Niger Delta, this eventually

resulted into an intra communal wars that lasted for about five years and killed over a hundred community members.

In 2004 the violence first started as a youth leadership tussle, over who would lead the community's youth body known as Rumuekpe Youth Council. Rumuekpe youths destroyed their own homes in the battle, turning Rumuekpe into a ghost town.



Conflict over payments by oil companies has led to the destruction of Rumuekpe

The fourth tenure of Solomon Obio as the youth president and Shell's liaison officer expired and he was succeeded by Friday Edu, popularly known as Pele (he is now dead, as he was consumed by the violence at Rukpokwu where he went to take refuge in the peak of the mayhem). Community members say that Pele on his part refused handing over to another person, SK Agala who was elected after fifteen years of the leadership of Pele. Pele wanted to continue with the position of Shell's Community Liaison Officer. The leadership tussles led to some deaths. SK and his group were reported to have been chased out of the community.

Chieftaincy wrangling was later introduced into the conflict as Pele is said to have deposed the then traditional ruler, Chief Ogbara and helped to enthrone his own relation, Chief Opara.

There were also issues of who has traditional rights to the land upon which Shell and the other companies were operating.^{xi} Some youths in the SK Agala camp later told reporters during a visit that what forced them to really embark on war with their brothers was the gruesome murder of a pastor, suspected to have been masterminded by the Pele group. The young man was said to have been grabbed from a church in the community, butchered and thrown into a

burning furnace. The SK group launched an attack on the members of the Pele group then being referred to as the 'old government'.

SK Agala, who was a special aide to the Emohua Local Government Council Chairman, Emeka Woke, was believed to have the support of both the local council, the Rivers State government of Dr. Peter Odili, as well as security operatives. The 'new government', as the SK group was referred to, launched its attacks from 'exile'. "Rumuekpe was littered with scores of dead bodies, while members of the community were forced to flee to nearby Ndele, Rumuji, and Elele-Alimini among others".^{xii} When fleeing members of community returned, thinking that the war was over, secret killings continued. People were killed in the farms, stream, roads, etc. The ensuing battles resulted in the death of dozens and the burning of most of the homes within the community.

Meanwhile Pele's group were dislodged from the community, and SK and his boys took over control. Shell, it was gathered, quickly transferred its support from the old government to the SK group who were then lording over a looted, deserted and burnt out community. Only the heavily armed youths and oil companies operating under heavy security provided by soldiers remained Rumuekpe.

For several years, Rumuekpe remained abandoned, and gradually, it was overtaken by thick bushes.

Shifting the battle ground

People flee war zones into exiles even in refugee camps for safety. Unfortunately, Rumuekpe people later found out that there was no safe place for them, as assassins were sent to hunt and eliminate them where ever they were taking refuge as both camps embarked on a killing spree. The battle ground expanded to include anywhere Rumuekpe people were taking refuge. The fighters also increased in sizes as alliances were formed with urban gangs and 'militants' that made themselves available as mercenaries. Friday Edu, leader of the 'old government', was trailed to his hide out at Rukpokwu, a suburb of Port Harcourt, and brutally murdered. A classroom teacher at Holy Rosary Girls' Secondary School, Port Harcourt, Mr Egbe, was trailed to his school and killed. A lawyer, Mr. Gilbert Obio was trailed to Port Harcourt and killed. Otamini, SK Agala's 'backbone', was trailed to Elele-Alimini where he was attacked. He narrowly escaped, but five of his 'boys' and a girl who were with him were killed during the attack. Another attack to dislodge the fighters of the 'new government' from their camp in Rumuekpe resulted in the killing of four persons. Another vengeance attack on Elele-Alimini led to the destruction of five houses. Several persons were also injured.

Government responses to the crisis

While guns were booming in Rumuekpe, the governments at all levels, simply turned a blind eye, leaving the warring factions to finish themselves. It was however alleged that while the fighting lasted, SK was still serving the Emohua Local Government Council Chairman as a

‘Special Aid’. Since they both worked for the ruling PDP, it was commonly believed that he also received supports and assistance from the government to execute the war.

To show that it valued oil and oil companies more than the people, the government dispatched soldiers to guard oil facilities. And as if the government really supported the obliteration of the community from the map, Rumuekpe was systematically removed from representation in all levels of the government, including at the Local Government Council Legislative Assembly.

In Search of Peace

A faith-based NGO, Hope for the Hopeless Global Initiatives, has embarked on frantic search for peace in the war-ravaged community. This group made efforts to convince the warring youths to drop their guns. And as if just waking up from a slumber, both factions are beginning to discuss ways of confronting their common enemies: the oil companies ravaging their environment. Leaders of the NGO have reported the dangers faced in working for peace in Rumuekpe. In one of their missions to the community, they were harassed by soldiers guarding Total’s facilities, while the pastor was actually manhandled by the angry soldiers who also threatened to shoot all the members of the team.^{xiii} And as if to confirm how risky a search for peace in Rumuekpe may be, Otamini who had earlier dropped his weapons and started championing the peace initiative, was brutally murdered in September 2008 after a peace meeting he organised in the community. Several other people were later killed in vengeance attacks that resulted from the murder. But the NGO has remained undaunted in the search for peace.



Returning Rumuekpe exiles pray for peace

IKARAMA

A ticking bomb

Ikarama is one of the six villages that make up Okordia clan in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The villages in the clan and their other neighbours, such as Kalaba, Ayamabele, Akumuni, Agbobiri, are settled along the Taylor Creek. All communities can easily be accessed by roads from Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State. Roads to Okordia communities also lead to oil wells and other oil industry infrastructure in the area. According to Chief Raphael Warder who doubles as Ikarama's Public Relations Officer and the head of the Izewari family, before the discovery of oil in the early 60s, the community which is made of five ruling families (Egberewari, Izewari, Ogbowari, Oguwari and Okuwari) used to have farmlands and very productive fishing waters that also serve other needs of the people.



Women and Children in Ikarama are main victims of oil pollution and conflicts.

Picture by Morris Alagoa

Oil Exploitation and spills in Ikarama

Oil was discovered in Ikarama in the early 1970s and till date plays host to both Eni's Agip and Shell. Though the later is relatively new in the community, its facilities such as the Ugheli-Ikarama-Rumuekpe trunk line (a major oil pipeline linking Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States) passes through Ikarama. In addition, Shell's Okordia Manifold is sited in the centre of the community, very close to human habitation. Equipment failure at this manifold caused five oil spills between June and December 2008 and the most recent oil spill which set part of the community ablaze, destroying farmlands, ponds, fishing nets on Sunday, 1st March, 2009.

Unlike other areas of the world where oil is found either in the deep ocean or in the desert, in Ikarama, Ogoni and Rumuekpe, oil is mined in previously fertile farmlands, in backyards and at the doorsteps of families. Oil pollution and gas flaring impact community members severely. These spills that occur in both land and waters of the community have led to the death of virtually all marine lives like fish, shrimps, crabs etc. while the land has also been rendered infertile and unproductive. This has caused untold hardship to the people who are predominantly farmers and fishers and whose livelihoods are depended on land and water.

The oil companies have not done any serious remediation work on the environment in the community beside its method of clean up which involves scooping the oil on water and land surface for dumping in open pits where crude is burnt.

Ikarama is as hapless as any other oil bearing community in the Niger Delta as the elders who happily received oil companies into the area in 1964, did not sign any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with them.

Today, there is evidence that oil companies have adopted divide and rule tactics, including in the practices of Shell's CAST (Community And Shell Together) that are now threatening the peace. As oil spills increased in the Ikarama and other communities in the area, CAST was established in 2007 to recruit from the unemployed youth in the area to provide surveillance for oil infrastructure and enforce continuous oil production. Shell's CAST is managed by one of its contractors from outside the community who in turn contracted a community member to supervise the surveillance operations. CAST members are now feared in the community, as they often double as local operatives of the ruling PDP.

Many community members hold the view that the community leadership should be involved in any arrangement to secure livelihoods and oil infrastructure. Instead, present practice may be creating a different power aligned to oil companies and undermining community spirit. Recruitment into CAST is said to be selective and skewed in favour of some families. This has resulted in increased mistrust and tensions among community members.

Effect of Oil spills on the Community:

Mrs. Ayibakuro Warder, the women leader of Ikarama community spoke to Social Action's team members during a visit to this community.

"The incessant oil spillage in this community and its impacts remain our greatest problem with Shell. As women who have children and family to feed and send to school, were the most affected when these oil spills occur. Let me mention just a few:

Our farming and arable lands are polluted and rendered unproductive;

When the crude oil flows into the Taylor Creek, it pollutes the entire water and damage our cassava soaked in it, causing us huge waste and hunger;

When the Creek is polluted, it denies us the right to do those things we ordinarily do in the Creek like fetching drinking water, taking our bathe or even just to swim there;

Our children and even adults often fall sick after gulping some water from the Creek so polluted and, in the course of looking for cure; we spend our hard earned money;

When spill sites are not cleaned [as is the case here], it reacts with the atmosphere to give us respiratory and skin problems. And in most cases it is we, the women that run around to ensure that the children or the family is okay. As very concerned members of our families, whenever there is health related problems, we suffer most because the burden of running around will be on us, cooking, washing and taking care of sick family members; this is what we bear due to oil spills;

The same thing happens when the oil spill impacted area is burnt instead of actually cleaning it. Here, Shell contractors always send their agents in the community to scoop and set fire on the oil spill. The effect is that, apart from the foul smoke we inhale therefrom, it later retain as acid rain on our crops, and roof tops. This, we believe, cause the rapid corrosion on our roofs. And it is not easy to change roofs every now and then;

When oil spills occur and it affects our ponds, swamps and lake, it kills all the aquatic lives there and renders those of us who depend on such sources to make ends meet really frustrated as losses incurred are never compensated, neither are the polluted ponds, lakes and swamps cleaned or any remedy provided. While women from other communities would be carrying the fish to the market every market day and smiling home, we have nothing;

As our lands are made barren by these oil spills, we are made even poorer, because if your family land is so damaged and you don't have any other, you will have to go on hiring/leasing farm land every year;

When the oil slick also is on the Creek and we can no longer drink from it, we are forced to go far in search of drinking water or sometimes buy sachet water to satisfy that need. And how many women can afford that for them selves and for their children, particularly the widows amongst us;

1We are denied our right to drink from our Creek and to farm and get better yield from the soil. All of these are sources of concern to the women of this community".



Cast members are also local operatives of the ruling party

A community member informed Social Action that “Ikarama is sitting on a keg of gun powder; there are enough weapons in every family to sink this community like Ayamabele”. He was referring to a neighboring village of same clan that was destroyed in conflicts over control of contracts and payments by the oil companies. Indeed, Anyamabele, Kalaba and Akumoni have been largely deserted by community members after mistrust and tensions led to arson and killings.

Before the politics of oil, the people had lived together in peaceful communities with respectable traditional leadership institution. Today as explained by Chief FearGod Kologa an overthrown Deputy Chief, “*different families that make up this community have been set against one another to the point where even the throne of the traditional ruler is also politicized*”. As it stands now, the bitterness that has been created in the minds of Ikarama people could lead to more serious crisis, unless urgent steps are taken to nib it in the bud.

Déjà vu

In Ikarama, the people have had a plethora of situations where state security personnel have come in on the invitation of oil companies to harass the people whenever there was a case of oil spill or fire outbreak.

The crisis that made communities like Rumuekpe, Kalaba, Ayamabele and Akumoni desolate started with mutual suspicions and tensions from the divisive tactics of oil companies and influential contractors and politicians. As in Ikarama, those ‘communal wars’ also originated with ill feelings over with pipeline surveillance and clearing contracts which were clearly

designed and awarded by oil companies operating in those areas to split the community members.

Anyamabele is about three kilometers from Ikarama. The community is now deserted leaving only armed state security personnel protecting oil infrastructure and having field days with livestock and food crops that were left behind by fleeing community members.



***Homes in Akumoni have been destroyed and abandoned
Picture by Morris Alagoa***

ⁱ Pa Saro-Wiwa *told members of the Justice Chukwudifu Oputa led Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission called Oputa Panel when they visited him at his home, Bane, Ogoni land.* See “Blood Trail, Repression and Resistance in the Niger Delta”, a publication of the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO)

ⁱⁱ “Nigeria earns \$36bn from oil, gas annually,” *Punch*, Monday, 27 Nov 2006

ⁱⁱⁱ Human Rights Watch, “Chop Fine: The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Rivers State, Nigeria,” January 2007 Volume 19, No. 2(A), p.16

^{iv} “In terms of pricing, whereas in 2008, our crude strength averaged \$97 per barrel, in the year 2009, as at January, the average basket is hovering around \$43 a barrel,” said Mohammed Bakindo of NNPC. Also, reported decline in daily crude production from two-million barrels per day in 2008 to about of 1.6 million barrels per day in early 2009 has negatively impacted on government revenues in 2009. See <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-03-29-voa7.cfm>

^v As reported by the state government newspaper, *The Tide* on 6 February, 2009

^{vi} <http://wsws.org/articles/2008/aug2008/oil-a06.shtml>

^{vii} Anguish of an Oil producing Community, *Beacon*, July 25-31, 2003

^{viii} see “The Shell report: continuing abuses in Nigeria 10 years after Ken Saro Wiwa”, *Environmental Rights Action*, 2005.

^{ix} “See, Shell and Rumuekpe Community, *The Beacon*, October, 5-11, 2001, page 2.

^x *Official Gazette Rivers State of Nigeria*, vol 36, no 10, August 26, 2004, Port Harcourt.

^{xi} Otamini Agala, the anchorman of the new government and the Chief Security Officer of the community once disclosed, see *National Point Newspapers*, Sept. 29, 2008, page 6

^{xii} nationalpointonline.com. Assessed in August 2008

^{xiii} *National Point newspapers*, Mon, Sept 22, 2008

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

OGONI BILL OF RIGHTS

PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF NIGERIA
NOVEMBER 1990

We, the people of Ogoni (Babbe, Gokana, Ken Khana, Nyo Khan and Tai) numbering about 500,000, being a separate and distinct ethnic nationality within the Federal Republic of Nigeria, wish to draw the attention of the Government and people of Nigeria to the undermentioned facts:

1. That the Ogoni people, before the advent of British colonialism, were not conquered or colonised by any other ethnic group in present day Nigeria.
2. That British colonisation forced us into the administrative division of Opobo from 1908 to 1947.
3. That we protested against this forced union until the Ogoni Native Authority was created in 1947 and placed under the then Rivers Province.
4. That in 1951 we were forcibly included in the Eastern Region of Nigeria where we suffered utter neglect.
5. That we protested against this neglect by voting against the party in power in the Region in 1957, and against the forced union by testimony before the Willink Commission of Inquiry into Minority Fears in 1958.
6. That this protest led to the inclusion of our nationality in Rivers State in 1967, which State consists of several ethnic nationalities with differing cultures, languages and aspirations.
7. That oil was struck and produced in commercial quantities on our land in 1958 at K. Dere (Bomu oilfield).
8. That oil has been mined on our land since 1958 to this day from the following oilfields: (i) Bomu (ii) Bodo West (iii) Tai (iv) Korokoro (v) Yorla (vi) Lubara Creek and (vii) Afam by Shell Petroleum Development Company (Nigeria) Limited.
9. That in over 30 years of oil mining, the Ogoni nationality have provided the Nigerian nation with a total revenue estimated at over 40 billion Naira (N40 billion) or 30 billion dollars.
10. That in return for the above contribution, the Ogoni people have received NOTHING.
11. That today, the Ogoni people have:
 - (i) No representation whatsoever in ALL institutions of the Federal Government of Nigeria.
 - (ii) No pipe-borne water.
 - (iii) No electricity.
 - (iv) No job opportunities for the citizens in Federal, State, public sector or private sector companies.
 - (v) No social or economic project of the Federal Government.
12. That the Ogoni languages of Gokana and Khana are undeveloped and are about to disappear, whereas other Nigerian languages are being forced on us.
13. That the ethnic policies of successive Federal and State Governments are gradually pushing the Ogoni people to slavery and possible extinction.
14. That the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited does not employ Ogoni people at a meaningful or any level at all, in defiance of the Federal government's regulations.
15. That the search for oil has caused severe land and food shortages in Ogoni - one of the most densely populated areas of Africa (average: 1,500 per square mile; national average: 300 per square mile.)
16. That neglectful environmental pollution laws and sub-standard inspection techniques of the Federal authorities have led to the complete degradation of the Ogoni environment, turning our homeland into an ecological disaster.
17. That the Ogoni people lack education, health and other social facilities.

18. That it is intolerable that one of the richest areas of Nigeria should wallow in abject poverty and destitution.

19. That successive Federal administrators have trampled on every minority right enshrined in the Nigerian constitution to the detriment of the Ogoni and have by administrative structuring and other noxious acts transferred Ogoni wealth exclusively to other parts of the Republic.

20. That the Ogoni people wish to manage their own affairs.

Now therefore, while reaffirming our wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, we make demand upon the Republic as follows:

That the Ogoni people be granted **POLITICAL AUTONOMY** to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called, provided that this Autonomy guarantees the following:

- (a) Political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people.
- (b) The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of OGONI economic resources for Ogoni development.
- (c) Adequate and direct representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions.
- (d) The use and development of Ogoni Languages in Ogoni territory.
- (e) The full development of Ogoni Culture.
- (f) The right to religious freedom.
- (g) The right to protect the OGONI environment and ecology from further degradation.

We make the above demand in the knowledge that it does not deny any other ethnic group in the Nigerian Federation of their rights and that it can only conduce to peace, justice and fairplay and hence stability and progress in the Nigerian nation.

We make the above demand in the belief that, as Obafemi Awolowo has written:

"In a true Federation, each ethnic group no matter how small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other ethnic group, no matter how large."

We demand these rights as equal members of the Nigerian Federation who contribute and have contributed to the growth of the Federation and have a right to expect full returns from that Federation.

Adopted by general acclaim of the Ogoni people on the 26th day of August, 1990, at Bori, Rivers State.

Signed on behalf of the Ogoni people by:

BABBE

- 1. HRH Mark Tsaro-Igbara, Gbenemene Babbe
- 2. HRH F.M.K. Noryaa, Menebua Ka-Babbe
- 3. Chief M.A.N. Tornwe III, JP
- 4. Prince J.S. Sangha
- 5. Dr. Israel K. Kue
- 6. Chief A.M.N. Gua

GOKANA

- 1. HRH James P. Bagia, Gberesako XI, Gbenemene Gokana
- 2. HRH C. A. Mitee, JP, Menebua Numuu
- 3. Chief E.N. Kobani, JP, Tonsimene Gokana
- 4. Dr. B.N. Birabi
- 5. Chief Kemte Gidaom, JP
- 6. Chief S.N. Orage

KEN-KHANA

- 1. HRH M.H.S. Eguro, Gbenemene Ken Khana
- 2. HRH C.B.S. Nwikina, Emah III, Menebua Bom

3. Mr. M.C. Daanwii

4. Chief T.N. Nwieke

5. Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa

6. Mr. Simeon Idemyor

NYO-KHANA

1. HRH W.Z.P. Nzidee, Gbenemen Baa 1 of Nyo-Khana

2. Dr. G.B. Leton, JP

3. Mr. Lekue Lah-Laolo

4. Mr. L. E. Mwara

5. Chief E. A. Apenu

6. Pastor M.P. Maeba

TAI

1. HRH B.A. Mballey, Gbenemene Tai

2. HRH G.N.K. Gininwa, Menebua Tua Tua

3. Chief J.S. Agbara

4. Chief D.J.K. Kumbe

5. Chief Fred Gwezia

6. HRH A. Demor-Kaani, Menebua Nonwa Tai

Appendix 2**THE KAIAMA DECLARATION**

By IJAW YOUTHS OF THE NIGER DELTA

BEING COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE ALL IJAW YOUTHS CONFERENCE WHICH HELD IN THE TOWN OF KAIAMA THIS 11TH DAY OF DECEMBER 1998.

INTRODUCTION

We, Ijaw youths drawn from over five hundred communities from over 40 clans that make up the Ijaw nation and representing 25 representative organisations met, today, in Kaiama to deliberate on the best way to ensure the continuous survival of the indigenous peoples of the Ijaw ethnic nationality of the Niger Delta within the Nigerian state.

After exhaustive deliberations, the Conference observed:

- a. That it was through British colonisation that the IJAW NATION was forcibly put under the Nigerian State
- b. That but for the economic interests of the imperialists, the Ijaw ethnic nationality would have evolved as a distinct and separate sovereign nation, enjoying undiluted political, economic, social, and cultural AUTONOMY.
- c. That the division of the Southern Protectorate into East and West in 1939 by the British marked the beginning of the balkanisation of a hitherto territorially contiguous and culturally homogeneous Ijaw people into political and administrative units, much to our disadvantage. This trend is continuing in the balkanisation of the Ijaws into six states-Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, mostly as minorities who suffer socio-political, economic, cultural and psychological deprivations.
- d. That the quality of life of Ijaw people is deteriorating as a result of utter neglect, suppression and marginalisation visited on Ijaws by the alliance of the Nigerian state and transnational oil companies.
- e. That the political crisis in Nigeria is mainly about the struggle for the control of oil mineral resources which account for over 80% of GDP, 95 %of national budget and 90% of foreign exchange earnings. From which, 65%, 75% and 70% respectively are derived from within the Ijaw nation. Despite these huge contributions, our reward from the Nigerian State remains avoidable deaths resulting from ecological devastation and military repression.
- f. That the unabating damage done to our fragile natural environment and to the health of our people is due in the main to uncontrolled exploration and exploitation of crude oil and natural gas which has led to numerous oil spillages, uncontrolled gas flaring, the opening up of our forests to loggers, indiscriminate canalisation, flooding, land subsidence, coastal erosion, earth tremors etc. Oil and gas are exhaustible resources and the complete lack of concern for ecological rehabilitation, in the light of the Oloibiri experience, is a signal of impending doom for the peoples of Ijawland.

g. That the degradation of the environment of Ijawland by transnational oil companies and the Nigerian State arise mainly because Ijaw people have been robbed of their natural rights to ownership and control of their land and resources through the instrumentality of undemocratic Nigerian State legislations such as the Land Use Decree of 1978, the Petroleum Decrees of 1969 and 1991, the Lands (Title Vesting etc.) Decree No. 52 of 1993 (Osborne Land Decree), the National Inland Waterways Authority Decree No. 13 of 1997 etc.

h. That the principle of Derivation in Revenue Allocation has been consciously and systematically obliterated by successive regimes of the Nigerian state. We note the drastic reduction of the Derivation Principle from 100% (1953), 50% (1960), 45% (1970), 20% (1975) 2% (1982), 1.5% (1984) to 3% (1992 to date), and a rumored 13% in Abacha's 1995 undemocratic and unimplemented Constitution.

i. That the violence in Ijawland and other parts of the Niger Delta area, sometimes manifesting in intra and inter ethnic conflicts are sponsored by the State and transnational oil companies to keep the communities of the Niger Delta area divided, weak and distracted from the causes of their problems.

j. That the recent revelations of the looting of national treasury by the Abacha junta is only a reflection of an existing and continuing trend of stealing by public office holders in the Nigerian state. We remember the over 12 billion dollars Gulf war windfall, which was looted by Babangida and his cohorts We note that over 70% of the billions of dollars being looted by military rulers and their civilian collaborators is derived from our ecologically devastated Ijawland.

Based on the foregoing, we, the youths of Ijawland, hereby make the following resolutions to be known as the Kaiama Declaration:

1. All land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to Ijaw communities and are the basis of our survival.
2. We cease to recognise all undemocratic decrees that rob our peoples/communities of the right to ownership and control of our lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent. These include the Land Use Decree and The Petroleum Decree etc.
3. We demand the immediate withdrawal from Ijawland of all military forces of occupation and repression by the Nigerian State. Any oil company that employs the services of the armed forces of the Nigerian State to "protect" its operations will be viewed as an enemy of the Ijaw people. Family members of military personnel stationed in Ijawland should appeal to their people to leave the Ijaw area alone.
- 4..Ijaw youths in all the communities in all Ijaw clans in the Niger Delta will take steps to implement these resolutions beginning from the 30th of December, 1998, as a step towards reclaiming the control of our lives. We, therefore, demand that all oil companies stop all exploration and exploitation activities in the Ijaw area. We are tired of gas flaring; oil spillages, blowouts and being labelled saboteurs and terrorists. It is a case of preparing the noose for our hanging. We reject this labelling. Hence, we advise all oil companies staff and contractors to withdraw from Ijaw territories by the 30th December, 1998 pending the resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of the Niger Delta.
- 5.. Ijaw youths and Peoples will promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all Ijaw communities and with our immediate neighbours, despite the provocative and divisive actions of the Nigerian State, transnational oil companies and their contractors. We offer a hand of friendship and comradeship to our neighbors: the Itsekiri, Ilaje, Urhobo, Isoko, Edo, Ibibio, Ogoni, Ekpeye, Ikwerre etc. We affirm our commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger delta area for self-determination.

6. We express our solidarity with all peoples organisations and ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and elsewhere who are struggling for self-determination and justice. In particular we note the struggle of the Oodua peoples Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (Mosop), Egi Women's Movement etc.

7. We extend our hand of solidarity to the Nigerian oil workers (NUPENG and PENGASSAN) and expect that they will see this struggle for freedom as a struggle for humanity.

8. We reject the present transition to civil rule programme of the Abubakar regime, as it is not preceded by restructuring of the Nigerian federation. The way forward is a Sovereign National Conference of equally represented ethnic nationalities to discuss the nature of a democratic federation of Nigerian ethnic nationalities. Conference noted the violence and killings that characterized the last local government elections in most parts of the Niger Delta. Conference pointed out that these electoral conflicts are a manifestation of the undemocratic and unjust nature of the military transition programme. Conference affirmed therefore, that the military are incapable of enthroning true democracy in Nigeria.

9 We call on all Ijaws to remain true to their Ijawness and to work for the total liberation of our people. You have no other true home but that which is in Ijawland.

10 We agreed to remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for Self Government and resource control for the Ijaw people. Conference approved that the best way for Nigeria is a federation of ethnic nationalities. The federation should be run on the basis equality and social justice.

Finally, Ijaw youths resolve to set up the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) to coordinate the struggle of Ijaw peoples for self-determination and justice.