MULTINATIONAL OIL CORPORATIONS IN SUB SAHARA AFRICA: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Oil exploration in sub Saharan Africa is characterized by environmental degradation resulting from oil spillage, gas flaring, deforestation and other negative practices that have for long, characterized the activities of multinational oil companies in the region. All stages of oil activity from exploration, drilling to transportation, affect the natural environment significantly. These environmentally-negative practices have consistently endangered the lives of the inhabitants. Multinational companies are the main engine of globalization and have over the years, dominated oil exploration activities in sub Saharan Africa. The aim of this paper is to discuss some of the environmental impacts of the activities of multinational oil companies in sub Saharan Africa. Data for this study were generated through secondary (desk) research, to identify existing literature about the impacts of multinational oil companies on oil-producing countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa. The result of the study shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has rich deposits of crude oil that is following a process of resource exploitation, which appears to intensify with globalization. With increasing emphasis on globalization, trade liberalization and the discovery of new oil fields and construction of oil pipeline, the environment in sub Saharan Africa is under serious threat. Loss of species/biodiversity, destruction of habitats, environmental dislocation, impoverishment of host communities and human rights abuses all constitute environmental degradation. This study recommends that the multinational oil companies operating in the region should strengthen their corporate social responsibility with the host communities. The governments of sub Saharan African countries should require oil companies to provide all the necessary social infrastructures before the commencement of oil exploitation. This is to ensure that their operations will not affect the environment and the local population negatively.

Keywords: Assessment, Environment, Globalization, Impact, Multi-National

Introduction

Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) is the part of Africa south of the Sahara Desert: the forty-seven countries that are not part of North Africa. It is one of the poorest regions in the world and hosts many of the least developed countries in the world. Despite considerable progress over the last decade, sub Sahara African countries continue to face major development challenges, including a high incidence of poverty, increasing environmental deterioration, illiteracy, poor health conditions, conflicts in some regions, and the relentless surge of HIV/AIDS at a time when a number of regions in the developing world are benefiting greatly from economic opportunities resulting from globalization. The African Development Bank (ADB) has estimated that between 40 and 45 per cent of the African people live in poverty, with about 30 per cent classified as extremely poor that is, living on less than $1 per day (Kabbaj, 2003).

Sub Sahara African countries are well endowed with oil and gas resources but do not have the technology and the capacity to exploit it. The multinational companies thus dominate oil and gas exploration activities in the region. The impact of the multinational companies on all spheres of these economies – political, social, environment and economic is quite significant, and worthy of investigation. However, what makes oil and gas quite unique is some characteristics associated with the presence of the resource in most sub Sahara African countries. Oil and gas has been the harbinger of macroeconomic distortion, corruption, rent-seeking, political and economic crises, environmental degradation, capital flight, and much more (Ernest and Adeola, 2006). Most of the countries in SSA with huge oil and gas deposits have not been able to translate the resources into direct economic development of their countries. Rather these countries are marred in poverty, sharp practices, social and economic inequalities, environmental degradation, governance crisis among others.

One important question that needs to be asked is this; is globalization beneficial to sub Sahara Africa? An answer to this question may spark off yet another heated debate. To attempt answering this question, this paper examines some of the environmental impacts of globalization on sub Sahara African countries, particularly the activities of multinational oil companies.

Globalization and Multinational oil Companies

Many people have different views about globalization. Some people see globalization as a new form of imperialism which is responsible for the increasing poverty, worsening income distribution and environmental degradation in developing countries, particularly sub Sahara Africa. Others view globalization as a panacea for development. To this set of people, what is needed for any poor country to attain a high growth of per capita and join the convergence club is putting in place an institutional framework and adopting policies that promote international trade and movement of capital. The driving forces of globalization are technology, taste, national and international policies. Globalization has become the most socio-economic and political issue in the world. Kiely (1998) defines globalization as "a world in which societies, cultures, polities and economies have, in some sense, come closer together". As observed by Onuka (2006) implied in Kiely's definition of globalization is the fact that no nation or individual can exist apart from the others. Marfleet (1998) contends that the concept of globalisation is "a process that brings new social and cultural locations together'', stating that globalisation involves crystallisation of suppositions about what the world is and would be, and should be. McMurty (2002) posits that the current trend in globalization connotes economic enslavement of some by others, because it manifests in its activities of multinational companies and in the advocacy for privatization.

McMurty further observed that the reality of globalisation should reflect in global cooperation across border and to stand for integrity and protection of the world's ecosystem for human and labour rights, for security against genocide in various oil fields and environmentally destructive corporation practices. He also points to the fact that multinational companies are the main engine of globalisation. Al-Amin *et al,* (2005) agrees with him by asserting that globalization combines elements of international and multinational companies at a more advanced stage of integration between countries. Public interest on the environmental impact of the operations of multinational enterprises in developing countries has grown significantly and has fuelled a heated public policy debate. In particular, there has been interest in the environmental degradation of host communities and nations resulting from the operations of multinational oil companies in developing countries and sub Saharan Africa (Eweje, 2006). Economic growth is perhaps the most commonly used indicator of human advances and development, but due to increasing levels of environmental degradation, environmentalists have expressed concerned about the negative impact of globalization, trade and overuses of the natural environment for domestic production.

So many studies have been carried out which show that increase in trade is directly or indirectly responsible for environmental degradation in developing countries (Al-Amin *et al,* 2005). These studies also revealed that all the dimensions of globalization somehow affect the natural environment. Globalization contributes to economic growth through trade expansion between countries and thereby affects the economy in many ways that adversely affect the environment. For example, globalization accelerates structural change, thereby altering the industrial structure of countries hence resource use and pollution levels increase. It equally transmits and magnifies market failures and policy distortions that may spread and exacerbate environmental damage (Al-Amin *et al*, 2005). More importantly, globalization intensifies trade liberalization and trade related activities which in turn affect the environment. This becomes evidently clear when we consider the fact that when goods and services are produced in an economy, it is directly or indirectly associated with the use of power and energy (petroleum oil, gas etc). Depending on the type of fuel used, emissions of that energy are obvious.

Unfortunately, not all countries of sub Sahara Africa (SSA) have the privilege of participating in this global economy since, most of its people depend on subsistence farming for their food supply and housing. Many Sub Sahara African countries lack adequate physical and institutional infrastructures. This has drastically reduced their opportunities to participate beneficially in the global economy. Thus, the global south, especially Sub-Sahara Africa, suffers under the burden of multinational corporate irresponsibility. The international free market created an unfair trading regime between Africa and the West whereby economic aid to the continent was tied to the opening up of markets in the name of globalization. Thus, globalization which liberalises trade and movement of capital makes it possible for the developed countries and their allies (multi-national companies) such as Shell and Exxon petroleum to flock to developing countries of sub Saharan Africa.

Although there are a number of factors causing environmental degradation and increasing levels of poverty in sub-Sahara Africa, the activities of multinational oil companies (a product of globalization) contributes immensely to the present increasing levels of environmental degradation and by extension increasing poverty in the region.

Several countries in sub-Sahara Africa are heavily dependent on oil and gas exports for both government revenues and as the dominant source of foreign exchange. Proven oil reserves in the ten sub-Sahara African countries (Nigeria, Angola, Sudan, Gabon, Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mozambique) are estimated at 57 billion barrels, some 4% of world reserves (World Energy Outlook 2008). The world energy report also shows that Sub-Sahara African countries exported 5.1 mb/d of oil in 2007, or about 91% of total production. Most of these exports were crude oil. The oil and gas sector also contributed 87% to GDP in Equatorial Guinea in 2006, 57% to Angolan GDP in the same year. Oil equally accounted for over 70% of GDP in Congo in 2006. Oil exports alone constitute over 90% of total exports in Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Sudan within the same period (World Energy Outlook 2008). The report equally noted that taxes on oil and gas production constitute a very large portion of total government tax revenues in these sub-Sahara African countries. Except in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique, oil and gas sector revenues account for more than half of total government revenues. In Congo, the figure is over 80% (World Energy Outlook 2008).

The share of the value of oil and gas exports in the total exports is also very high. Thus, these sub- Saharan African countries mentioned here flared 40 bcm of gas - a level that has not changed since year 2000 (World Energy Outlook 2008). Africa's oil boom comes at a time when foreign aid to Africa from industrialized countries is falling and being replaced by an emphasis from donor nations on trade as a means for African countries to escape poverty and attain the much desired development. The dominance of oil and mining in Africa's trade relationships, coupled with this decline in aid flows, means that it is high time, Africa wake up from their slumber and make the best use of its oil money. As the world oil demand increases, oil-producing countries in sub-Sahara Africa are increasing their production and export capacities, leading to an increasing volume of oil being shipped through pipelines and via tankers. As shipping lanes become more congested, the chances of spills and accidents increase, putting the environment at greater risk (Salihu *et al*, 2007).

The oil producing countries of sub Sahara Africa have long suffered and are still suffering from environmental degradation resulting from oil spillage, gas flaring and other negative environmental practices that have for long characterized the activities of multinational oil companies operating in the region. These environmentally negative practices have consistently endangered the lives of the inhabitants of the region. According to Osuoka (2003), all stages of oil activity from exploration and drilling to transportation, result in the destruction of the natural environment and the livelihood of the local inhabitants who depend on the land and water bodies of the area for their survival. These, when combined with incessant oil spills and blowouts resulting from over-aged and ill maintained wellheads, pipelines and other facilities, make the sub Sahara African countries particularly Nigeria's oil field to record the highest number of oil spill incidents in the world (ICG, 2006; Agbu, 2005; Osuoka, 2003). The devastation of the natural habitat of the region has accelerated the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the people. The dimensions of threats to human security encompass gross violations of human rights, environmental degradation, terrorism, transnational organized crime, gender-based violence, infectious diseases and natural disasters (Hubert, 2001). The anger of the people in the region against the multinational oil companies is as a result of environmental degradation and the loss of livelihood that their operations have engendered (Ovwsa, 1999). Oil spillage resulting from oil exploration has led to the pollution of farmlands, fishing streams and ponds, while indiscriminate gas flaring pollute the air and result in acid rain (Raji, 1998). The environmental degradation meant that farming and fishing, the mainstay of the economy of the people in the region is constantly under threat.

Methods

The first approach adopted in data collection for this study was secondary (desk) research to identify existing literature about the impacts of multinational oil companies on oil-producing countries located in sub-Saharan Africa. Additional information was obtained through country-specific explorations through web-based generic search engines, using the snowball method to retrieve significant references. I focused the search on papers by academics and development or non-profit organisations.

Most of the information relevant to the impacts of multinational oil companies on oil-rich areas in sub Saharan Africa especially the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Angola, southern Chad and Southern Sudan were considered. Accordingly, these four settings were selected for illustrative purposes.

Oil Exploration and conflicts in oil producing sub Saharan African Countries

The association between oil extraction and armed violence is well established, and it is classically considered one of the root causes of the resource curse. First, interstate conflicts are a recurrent theme in the history of oil extraction particularly in sub Sahara Africa (Watts, 2005). Second, most of the sub-Sahara countries endowed with substantial oil reserves have been the site of recent or protracted conflicts and violence of some sort. These include civil wars, inter-ethnic conflicts, interstate disputes and military interventions, political repression, human rights abuses (Volman, 2003). Third, oil booms frequently result in the misappropriation of oil revenues by rulers of oil producing countries, bloating the share of the national budget allotted to military expenditures and/or to the weapons industry. Sudan (Christian Aid, 2001) and Chad (Christian Aid, 2003) are classical examples. Fourth, there are complex relationships between multinational oil companies and the security apparatus of their host governments (Watts, 2005), leading in extreme cases to their complicity with security forces in perpetrating human rights abuses (Frynas, 2001; Gagnon and Ryle, 2001). Lastly, the accumulation of adverse political, economic and social effects resulting from oil exploration often cause grievances at local levels that lead to armed conflict (Ross, 2001). A typical example is the ongoing political violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Human Rights Watch Report, 2007). The peculiar importance of conflicts here is that it results in adverse environmental effects which often extend well beyond the period of active warfare (Gobarah *et al*, 2003).

Oil Exploration and the environment

The presence of multinational oil companies in oil-rich areas of sub Sahara Africa affects directly the environment and by extension the welfare of local populations. Environmentalists argue that the activities of multinational corporations results in overexploitation of the fragile natural resources (like forests or fishery) and thus damage the livelihoods of the poor in sub-Sahara Africa. Most of the benefits that local communities enjoy from the corporate social responsibility of the multinational companies come at a great cost to the local communities. Either by omission or commission, the activities of these multinational companies and its processes of delivering its corporate social responsibility programmes impact negatively on local communities, often outweighing the positive benefits (Watts, 2004; Newell, 2005; Stern, 2005; Eweje, 2007; Tuodolo 2007). Examples of adverse outcomes and impacts include: direct effects of environmental degradation, increase in road traffic accidents, and acceleration of the spread of HIV/AIDS and of other sexually transmitted infections. A few case studies from sub Sahara African countries are briefly discussed.

Niger Delta region (Nigeria)

In 1956, Shell British Petroleum (now Royal Dutch Shell) discovered crude oil at Oloibiri, a village in the Niger Delta, but commercial production began in 1958. Today, there are 606 oil fields in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, of which 360 are on-shore and 246 off-shores (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2005). Nigeria is now the largest oil producer in Africa and the sixth largest in the world, averaging 2.7 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2006. Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on earnings from the oil sector, which provides 20% of GDP, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 65% of budgetary revenues (CIA World Fact Book, 2005).

In spite of such wealth, the Niger Delta is a region where the GNP per capita and educational levels remain below national average, and 70 percent of its 20 million people are living below the poverty line (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Aaron, 2005). The environmental impact of oil production in the region has been disastrous, due to frequent oil spills and to the common practice of gas flaring (Pirani, 2004; Aaron, 2005 and Avgeropoulos, 2006).

Oil spills are common occurrence in Nigeria's Niger Delta area. An estimated amount of 9 million to 13 million barrels has been spilled since oil drilling commenced in 1958 (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2010). The Nigerian Government has estimated that nearly 7,000 spills occurred in a period of 30 years, between 1970 and 2000. Causes for these oil spills include corrosion of pipelines and tankers (which accounts for 50% of all spills), sabotage (28%); and oil production operation (21%), with 1% of the spills being accounted for by inadequate or non-functional production equipment (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2010).

A recent report on oil spills in Nigeria compiled by the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) reveals that 3,203 oil spills have been recorded in the Niger Delta region in the past four years (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2010). Some of the major spills according to Nwilo and Badejo (2005) are the GOCON's Escravos spill in 1978 of about 300,000 barrels, SPDC's Forcados Terminal tank failure in 1978 of about 580,000 barrels and Texaco Funiwa-5 blow out in 1980 of about 400,000 barrels. Other oil spill incidents are those of the Abudu pipe line in 1982 of about 18,818 barrels, The Jesse Fire Incident which claimed about a thousand lives and the Idoho Oil Spill of January 1998, of about 40,000 barrels. The most publicised of all oil spills in Nigeria occurred on January 17, 1980 when a total of 37.0 million litres of crude oil got spilled into the environment (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005). This spill occurred as a result of a blow out at Funiwa 5 offshore station. According to the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), between 1976 and 1996 a total of 4647 incidents resulted in the spill of approximately 2,369,470 barrels of oil into the environment (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005). Of this quantity, an estimated 1,820,410.5 barrels (77%) were lost to the environment. A total of 549,060 barrels of oil representing 23.17% of the total oil spill into the environment was recovered. The heaviest recorded spill so far occurred in 1979 and 1980 with a net volume of 694,117.13 barrels and 600,511.02 barrels respectively. Available records for the period of 1976 to 1996 indicate that approximately 6%, 25%, and 69% respectively, of total oil spilled in the Niger Delta area, were in land, swamp and offshore environments. Also, between 1997 and 2001, Nigeria recorded a total number of 2,097 oil spill incidents (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005).

Gas flaring in the process of oil exploration in the Niger delta has contributed more greenhouse gases than all of sub-Sahara Africa combined (Friends of the Earth, 2004). This has contributed to climate change, the impacts of which are already being felt in the region with food insecurity, increasing risk of disease and the rising costs of extreme weather damage. The flares also contain widely-recognized toxins, such as benzene, which pollute the air. Local people complain of respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis. They also complain about the roaring noise and the intense heat from the flares. The particles from the flares fill the air, covering everything with a fine layer of soot. Thus, livelihoods that have traditionally relied upon fishing and farming have been decimated by oil pollution and gas flaring. These vital resources are now severely compromised by the effects of water pollution, degradation of arable soils and land seizure (Aaron, 2005). Conflict and violence have been persistent since the 1990, due to multiple and intricate factors (de Jong, 2000; Idemudia and Ite, 2000). This has created a climate of rebellion and insecurity, culminating recently in the frequent kidnapping of foreign oil workers, a threat to the sustainability of industrial investments (Mouawad, 2007). Political repression (Human Rights Watch Report, 2007) and massacres of rebellious communities by official authorities are well documented (Pirani, 2004). Specific instances of state's violent repression against oil communities in the country include: Egbema Crisis (1989-91); Oburu violence (1989) Umuechem Massacre (November, 1990); Bonny tragedy (1992); Egi-Obaji mayhem (1994) Tai-Biara (Ogoni) Massacre (1994); Ubima tragedy (1995); Odi Massacre 1999 e.t.c (Eteng, 1996; Akinwumi, 2004; Ovwasa, 1999; Raji, 1998). Presently, the whole of the Niger Delta is under military occupation. The Niger Delta region is more affected by HIV infection than any other region or zone in the country, due to the combined effects of poverty, urbanisation, unemployment, and migration of foreign or national labourers (Udoma *et al*, 2004).

Nigeria and Algeria are now studying the possibility of constructing a trans-Saharan gas pipeline. The 4,023-km pipeline would carry 20 bcm to 30 bcm per year of associated natural gas from oilfields in Nigeria's Delta region to Algeria's Beni Saf LNG export terminal on the Mediterranean (World Energy Outlook 2008). It is estimated that the construction of the $7-billion pipeline project would take six years. Like the Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project (CCPDPP), this project will have a lasting impact on the physical environment in sub Sahara Africa.

Angola

Angola is the second-largest oil producer in SSA after Nigeria. Its oil production was expected to reach 2 mbd by 2008 (Ernest and Adeola, 2006). Angola also has major offshore sources of gas. The oil and gas industries, both considered highly promising, have attracted over $20 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) since 2003. The Angolan economy is highly dependent on its oil sector, which accounts for over 40% of gross domestic product (GDP) and almost 90% of the government's revenues (Ernest and Adeola, 2006). The country has a population of 12.4 million people, and is one of the richest countries in Africa. Yet, it ranks poorly in terms of social development and it has the highest level of inequality among oil and gas producers. At least one third of Angola's population resides in shantytowns (Kibble, 2006) with very limited access to clean water (Christian Aid, 2003).

The year 2002 marked the end of 27 years of civil war between UNITA rebels funded by the diamond trade and the governing MPLA financed by oil exports (Volman, 2003 and Kibble, 2006). Oil revenues have sustained a protracted war effort against the armed separatist rebellion, which claims sovereignty over the Cabinda enclave, a territory including 60 percent of Angola's oil assets (Le Billon, 2005). In August 2006, a peace agreement was signed between the government and rebel forces in Cabinda.

Southern Chad

With the assistance of the World Bank Group (WBG), oil fields have been exploited since 2004 in the Doba basin of southern Chad, through an impressive and elaborate public-private partnership between a consortium of multinational companies, and the governments of Chad and Cameroon (Shane, 2001). The project includes the development of three oil fields in southern Chad, a 1000-km underground pipeline running through Cameroon, an offshore export terminal, and the construction or rehabilitation of a large number of ancillary infrastructures alongside (Pegs, 2006).

The 'Chad Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project' (CCPDPP) was a major investment and an effort by the WBG and its partners to set up a model of economic, political and social projects that will help in poverty reduction through oil exports (Shane, 2001). Although civil unrest and conflict have not specifically reached this southern region of Chad, the civil society organisations have expressed strong reservations about the anticipated benefits of the project, with regard to the endemic climate of corruption, poor governance and political repression (Pegs 2003; Gary and Karl, 2003).

The Chad – Cameroon project has had and will continue to have adverse impacts on the people and the environment of the region. The project has led to influx of migrants who are job seekers and truck drivers. Most of these people are single or unaccompanied men, while up to 50% of the prostitutes in some areas around the pipeline are infected with HIV/AIDS (Karl, 2007; Jobin, 2003; Kigotho, 1997).

The pipeline will require roads to provide maintenance and increasing access to the rainforest. This project will require the presence of outsiders to maintain it and this will have lasting negative effects on the communities. It will increase illegal logging and export of exotic animals and plants. The Bakola people may not be culturally prepared for the onslaught of outside ideas and the problems that may come with them, not to mention their heavy dependence on an ecosystem that could be unbalanced by the intrusion of the pipeline. The Chad – Cameroon oil pipeline project will affect the Bakola's people of the Cameroon Atlantic forest (Shane, 2001). Most of the people of these areas are highly dependent on the forest resources of the area for their livelihood.

Also after the completion of the project, the possible environmental oil spillage and illegal dumping of sump waste would have devastating impacts on those people who use the waters of the coast for their livelihood. Environmental degradation and heavy use of fresh water could cause long term effects on the mostly agrarian communities in the Doba Basin. For the Bakola, this could be a life-and-death issue or at least a very significant life-changing project. Furthermore, at the terminal point of the pipeline many Cameroonians in the Kribi area who depend on the sea for their livelihood will be affected. An offloading terminal near the coast area with the accompanying ship traffic could cause widespread environmental degradation. The ships alone bring with them industrial waste and garbage, which is sometimes dumped overboard illegally. In the event of a massive oil spill thousands of people in the area would lose their livelihood, and hundreds of plant and animal species would be destroyed (Shane, 2001).

Southern Sudan

Oil exploration in Sudan started in 1959, but the first major find was only made in 1980 by the US company Chevron (now Chevron-Texaco), north of Bentiu in Western Upper Nile state (now renamed and boundaries changed to Unit state). A glance at a concession map (ECOS, 2007) reveals outright how much the geographical and human landscape of southern Sudan is and will be affected by oil extraction and by the presence of multinational companies. Environmental issues have rarely been considered in oil exploration activities in Sudan. This has had very negative impacts on the environment. The most significant of these impacts are construction of access roads for very heavy equipment, seismic survey lines and drilling sites (UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Europe, 2006). The damage to the environment is mainly physical, comprising deforestation and devegetation, erosion and watercourse siltation, and disrupted drainage patterns. Extensive damage of this type has been observed north of the Heglig facility in Southern Kordofan (UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Europe, 2006).

The areas targeted for oil exploration in Southern Sudan are particularly vulnerable to exploration related damage, as they do not have many existing roads, are relatively well forested, have very soft soils, and flood for several months a year. Oil exploration in Sudan also resulted in displacement of innocent civilians from the areas of Talisman's operation to create a no man's land around the oil wells. Displacement is effected by bombings and burnings of communities.

After a devastating conflict between the north and the south spanning about 50 years, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed on January 2005 between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This peace settlement is fragile due to ongoing tensions between political factions; disputes over the final territorial borders between the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the recently established Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS); and the uncertain fate and livelihoods of returnees, most of them compelled to settle in fast expanding urban areas (USAID, 2007). Access to oil fields has been one of the major issues in the protracted north-south conflict (Christian Aid, 2003; Reeves, 2000), resulting in loss of livelihoods, forced displacements, massive violations of human rights, and ultimately to dramatic environmental impacts and to the destruction of many rural communities (Medecins, 2002). Evidence for the complicity of some multinational companies with helping the GOS in repeated attacks on civilian populations is overwhelming (Gagnon and Ryle 2001 and Christian Aid, 2001). The most publicised case involved Talisman Energy, the largest Western company involved in Sudan at the time, which ultimately withdrew from its oil operations in the country in 2003, in response to shareholders' concerns over human rights abuses.

During the last years of the north-south conflict (2000–2004) and under implicit or explicit political agendas (Middleton and O'Keefe, 2006; Harmer A), the international community spent huge amounts of money in humanitarian aid, essentially as food distributions. The people of southern Sudan do not seemed to have learned a lesson from the environmental tragedy in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. For example, recent reports indicate forceful evictions and ongoing environmental degradation by oil companies in the Sudd Wetlands, the largest swamplands of the world. Cattle livelihoods are being lost. Soils and drinking water are contaminated by saline water injected to maintain pressure of the oil reservoirs, and by the dumping of industrial waste in swamp areas liable to flooding (Bosire, 2008).

From the case studies above, it is clear that the activities of multi national oil companies, a product of globalization has impacted greatly on the environment in sub Sahara Africa. Globalization intensifies trade liberalization and trade related activities which in turn increase the inflow of multi-national oil corporations into sub Sahara Africa region. The activities of these multi national oil corporations have affected and will continue to affect the environment in the region. Multinational oil companies operating in sub Sahara Africa do not conform to international standard and best practices. This is evidently clear in some of the obsolete practices employed by multinational companies in their oil exploration activities. For example, the multinational oil companies adopt the "Open pipe flare" method to flare gas in the region. This method degrades the environment more than accepted types, such as the "ground open flare" with Sand Banks. This is further worsened by continuous use of over aged and outdated pipelines which easily spill their contents into the environment. Seismographic and construction activities of multinational oil companies have undermined the local economies of sub Sahara Africa leading to occupational disorientation and the exacerbation of poverty in the region.

The harmful effects of oil spill on the environment are many. Oil kills plants and animals in the estuarine zone. Oil settles on beaches and kills organisms that live there. It also settles on ocean floor and kills benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms such as crabs. Oil poisons algae, disrupts major food chains and decreases the yield of edible crustaceans. It also coats birds, impairing their flight or reducing the insulative property of their feathers, thus making the birds more vulnerable to cold. Oil endangers fish hatcheries in coastal waters and as well contaminates the flesh of commercially valuable fish (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005). Oil spillage destroy vegetation, mangrove forests, food/cash crops, fishing ground/marine life, reduces nutrient value of the soil, induces land fragmentation, and in isolated cases, sets communities on fire. Their destruction means alienating the people from their means of production. Gas flaring is associated with many of the devastating health ailments that afflict human beings. The heat generated during oil exploration kills vegetation around the flare area, destroys mangrove swamps and salt marsh, suppresses the growth and flowering of some plants, induces soil degradation, and diminishes agricultural production (UNDP, 2006:186, Mba, 2000:223). Equally destructive to the environment is the seismographic use of dynamites during oil exploration. The boring of 3 – 6 meter holes for seismogelite explosive shots do contribute to the destruction of soil quality and habitable buildings.

As observed by Opukri (2008), the use of explosives has been found to be responsible for the extinction of certain species of animals, resulting in depletion of wildlife. It is time sub Sahara Africa countries define their trade policies by given adequate attention to the environment.

Conclusion

With increasing emphasis on globalization, trade liberalization, discovery of new oil fields and construction of new oil pipeline projects, the environment in sub Sahara Africa is under serious threat. Unfortunately, new oil producers, such as Equatorial Guinea and Uganda appear to be repeating some of the mistakes of their more experienced sister countries. Gone are the days when oil communities rejoice at the announcement of crude oil finds in their territories (Bassey, 2001). This is because oil find in any community today heralds environmental and human rights abuse of monumental proportion. Loss of species/biodiversity, destruction of habitats, environmental dislocation, impoverishment of host communities and subjugation all constitute environmental degradation. Even as the level of environmental degradation increases with the activities of multinational oil companies, there are many more new discoveries of oil fields and pipeline projects. These includes oil discovery in Ghana, Uganda, Mauritania, Malawi, DR Congo, Tanzania – Mozambique – South Africa and Nigeria – Algeria oil pipeline projects.

The international oil companies have contributed to environmental degradation, mostly caused by oil spills, and a government that cannot enforce its laws on MNCs has exacerbated this situation. Natural resources are a blessing to many countries, but for those that lack the political structures and governance to effectively regulate the industry and maximise benefits for its populace, that blessing can often turn into a curse. Sub Sahara African governments, multinational oil companies, and oil-dependent Western countries have been too slow and nonchalant towards implementing reforms aimed at aiding a desperately under-developed region and remediating the unsustainable environmental degradation that oil and gas extraction has wrought. Thus, globalization as it is at the moment cannot be said to be beneficial to sub Sahara African countries. This is because the government of sub Sahara African countries have not being able to utilize effectively the opportunities provided by globalization to improve the quality of life and environment in their respective countries. The multinational companies operating in the region need to address seriously their corporate social responsibility to host communities. Corporate social responsibility of companies must not stop only with the provision of few boreholes, constructions of block of classrooms and awarding of few scholarships. It needs to be extended to other welfare projects as electrification, road construction, while skill acquisition and empowerment programme needs to be instituted for the host communities' benefit (Salihu *et al*, 2007). The governments of sub Sahara African countries should require oil companies to provide all the necessary social infrastructures before the commencement of oil exploitation so that their operations will not impact negatively on the environment and the local population. Above all, the governments of Sub Saharan Africa countries should ensure that multinational oil companies operating in the region conform to international standard and best practices so as to protect the environment.

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