

ILLEGAL REFINING OF CRUDE OIL IN NIGERIA NIGER DELTA REGION: EMERGING NEW SOCIAL DYNAMICS**Onyeché Chinwendu PhD**

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Abstract

This paper focused on illegal refining of crude oil in Nigeria Niger Delta Region: Emerging new social dynamics. This paper was triggered by painful observation of health challenges, environment degradation, and gun battles between owners of the illegal refineries and security agencies in Niger Delta region. By history and records, Nigeria Niger Delta region petroleum history and environment is one of the most tragic and horrible in the world. Recently, a more hazardous air pollutant known as black soot has emerged in the region causing dark smoke in the sky of rural communities and urban center, such as Port Harcourt, etc. This paper examines the complex interplay between illegal refining of crude oil in Niger Delta, with the objective of exploring how this has reshaped the social dynamics of the people over the years. The objective is to contribute deeper understanding of the nexus between illegal refining, environmental pollution, social dynamics. This paper utilized secondary sources of data, and argued that poverty in the Niger Delta region has led to proliferation of illegal refining of crude oil by the youth, which usher new social dynamics in the communities, by encouraging ill-gotten wealth. Dialectical materialism was explained and adopted as theoretical framework. The paper concludes that the youths believed that Federal Government has failed woefully in their responsibility to provide jobs for them, and social amenities, now they resorted to illegal refining of crude oil as means of livelihood, empowerment and sustainer. This paper recommended as follows: Aggressive efforts should be made by government at all levels (local, state, and federal) with or without any special intervention development commission to tackle the age-long problems of gross underdevelopment in Niger Delta region by way of providing basic amenities such as roads, drinkable water, hospitals, and physiological needs to the people.

Keywords*Niger Delta,**Illegal Refining,**Crude Oil,**Social Dynamics.***1. Introduction**

What is really happening in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria? Despite government crackdowns, illegal refining of crude oil in the Niger Delta region has continued to resurface, just like a rat with many holes. Emboldened by lucrative profits, operators of the illicit business are prepared for a showdown, even if it means risking their lives. This economic sabotage and danger has continued to reign supreme, day in, and day out, the media space is flooded with the same heartbreaking stories of Illegal refining of crude oil which is seriously causing environmental pollutions from air emissions and contaminated water, leading to other challenges not limited to increased health risk problems, soil degradation, and damage to the mangrove ecosystem and biodiversity of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

It is on record, that notwithstanding government best efforts, these illicit operators seem to defy all government tactics, leaving the authorities frustrated and helpless. The cycle of discovery, destruction, and resurgence continues unabated, with the illegal refiners always one step ahead of the law. Illegal refineries are “legal” in the

eyes of a large percentage of people from Niger Delta. To those in the act, oil theft and illicit refining are a right rather than a crime. According to Punch Newspaper (2024), Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited said it had deactivated about 6,800 illegal refineries in Nigeria in the past two years. The Punch Newspaper front page Wednesday September 24th 2025, recorded that 8.41trn oil theft drains economy, fuels investors doubt. These things don't just happen from the blues, they happen in communities and locations we all know. As we remove one illegal connection, another one comes up. This kind of oil theft does not happen anywhere else in the world except in Nigeria Niger Delta region.

The Niger Delta was once a thriving ecosystem, but it is currently facing severe environmental degradation, earning the region a new name "half-dead" region. This is obvious because the oil production and the commercial activities surrounding it have remained the economic mainstay of Nigeria given the neglect of other vital sub-sectors of the economy such as agriculture, which was formally the dominate economic activity before the discovery of crude oil in Niger Delta in the 19450s, which produce sudden economic revenue shift in Nigeria till today.

Despite all the blessings the discovery of oil has brought, there is a multi-dimensional poverty in the region, which has provided the social incentive for most of illegal economic activities that reinforce the economics of conflict. According to Okaba (2005), poverty amidst plenty continue to provide the necessary drive for most of the anti-social activities in the Niger Delta region and most parts of the country. It is worth of note, that illegal refining in Nigeria represents a distorted economic aspect of the oil and gas industry. There is the need to clarify the fact that not all oil refining activities are actually regarded as illegal. Furthermore, oil refining can go on under legitimate process whereby a duly licensed operator provided etc (Okombo, 2003).

However, the focus of this paper is on illegal refining of crude oil which emerged and has persisted following the internal contradictions that came with petroleum production. Iwarimie-Jaja and Raimi (2018) stated that the "adverse social scenario, despite massive wealth associated with the oil and gas industry, a large number of the masses are unemployed and live below established poverty lines, created room for all kinds of criminality to emerge". Illegal refining in Nigeria started as a product of the contradictions associated with the political economy of the petroleum industry which, since its inception has characterized the exploitation of the masses by the country's ruling class and their multinationals allies.

In addition, the undoubted fact that Nigeria lost large scale of petroleum resources valued as huge financial amount to the nation, individuals and institutions, the activities has emerged new social dynamics in the Niger Delta. Oil and gas are critical to Nigeria's economic and social performance. Oil alone accounts for 40 percent of the country's GDP, 70 percent of budget revenues, and 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Nigeria's dependence on petroleum is much greater than that of many other major producing countries. Illegal refining of oil is seen as organized environmental attack or crime that are causing conflict and unbearable insecurity in the rich oil region of Niger Delta of Nigeria. In line with report of environmental impact assessment of oil exploration in Ogoni Kingdom, Rivers State, Nigeria, which was conducted by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 2011, illegal crude oil refining are the major causes of water and air pollutions and soil contamination in the area, with harmful impacts on human health, aquatic life, and the entire ecological system. With the noticeable environmental and health destructions in the region, illegal crude oil refining has also increased organized crimes such as, drug trafficking, cultism, piracy, arm proliferation, among others and the deployment of repressive security measures is constant in the region.

This study examines the complicity between illegal refining of crude oil in the Niger Delta region, with the objective of exploring how this has reshaped the social dynamics of the people over the years. This paper will contribute deeper understanding of the nexus of illegal refining, environmental pollutions, and social dynamics.

2. Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta region, located in the Southern part of Nigeria is a paradox of abundance and adversity, where the vast wealth extracted from its oil and gas reserves contrasts sharply with the grim reality of lack associated with environmental degradation, socio-economic challenges, and crass lacking of modern infrastructures. The Niger Delta has been a focal point for global energy market since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in 1958, just as it has become a region known for contentious political, resource environmental rights struggles. The region has been pivotal to Nigeria's economy growth, making significant contributions to the country's GDP and public revenues. In 2023 alone, the Nigerian government generated 29 trillion Naira oil revenues. Regardless of these huge revenues, along similar trillions of Naira that have flowed into the region as 13 percent oil derivation funds, and allocations to interventionist agencies such as the Oil Minerals Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the region and its citizens remains largely very poor, lacking basic needs of life such as clean water, shelter, clothing, education, health

facilities, energy and adequate security, etc.

Worst of it all, the region rich mangrove swamps and vibrant biodiversity have continued to suffer irreparable damage from decades of oil spills, gas flaring, unchecked industrial activities, agricultural, fishing, infrastructural development and illegal refining of crude oil. These environmental impacts have undermined local ecosystems and traditional livelihood of the people such as fishing and agricultural, which is the mainstay upon which many communities in the region depend and sustain (Ibaba, 2008; Ibaba, 2008; Ibaba, 2012; Ibaba, 2014; Ibaba, 2014; Ibaba, 2017). Few years back, vandalism and illegal tapping of oil pipelines by criminal gangs has increasingly resurface in the region, which compelled oil firms to regularly declare force majeure on oil and gas exports thereby undercutting profits and reducing government revenues. According to United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 2011, the Nigeria government reportedly loses an average of 20,000 barrel of crude oil per day, which is more than 10 percent of daily production, and an estimated \$4 billion yearly as a result of illegal oil refining activities in the Niger Delta region. This paper seeks to examine the complicity between illegal refining of crude oil in Nigeria Niger Delta region: Emerging new social dynamics.

Causes of Illegal Refining of Crude Oil in Niger Delta

Many things are linked to the causes of illegal refining of crude oil in Niger Delta region. But few of them are listed below:

Poverty

The people in the region are poor despite the natural mineral blessings. The poor must eat and survive. Therefore, they want money at all cost. They see everything as opportunity to make money. As such, they have no alternative to doing the only thing that seems to be available to them.

Neglect

The Federal Government neglects the people who live where golden egg (oil) is drilled. Many people in the Niger Delta region where oil is gotten have died fighting for their people's rights. To express their grievances, they have kidnapped many oil workers, and later started kidnapping their own people demanding a high ransom. Yet, the Federal Government continues to neglect them. According to Niger Delta people, the Federal Government is cheating them. By the 1999 constitution of Federal Government of Nigeria as amended, the oil belongs to the Federal Government, and the land belongs to them by nature. Therefore, equity demands that the owners of the land should be compensated, where the Federal Government fails to compensate them, they resort to taking it by force and trick hence the illegal activities of all kinds.

Greed

This contradict the idea of Niger Delta people involved in illegal crude oil refining are poor. Many people who are involved in illegal crude oil activities are not poor people, some of them work in reputable offices in government and private sector, holding juice positions and well recognized persons in the society, but they involve themselves in the business. They are only being greedy, showing they are not satisfied with whatever they have as individuals.

Lack of Monitoring

Monitoring of pipelines is the sole responsibility of the Federal Government, but it is very unfortunate that government does not provide effective monitoring of the oil pipelines under their watch. They are left for nobody to care for it. Regrettably, because of their lack of care, some of the pipelines rust, some of them burst on their own due to old age causing spill on the environment. Some people are then lured into scooping the oil for their use as they deem necessary.

Sabotage

This is another secret business for high class citizens and low class in our country today. Some highly place politicians use illegal crude oil refining to sabotage the efforts of the Federal Government, especially opposition politicians in our county. They cry foul against the Federal Government that it is not doing enough. This they do just to sabotage the Government efforts. Most times it is a wakeup call for government to embark on a project and better the life of the citizens.

3. Conceptual Clarification

Illegal crude oil refining: Is the act of hacking into pipelines to steal crude oil which is later refined or sold abroad or locally. It also connotes the unauthorized aspect of oil activities as mentioned in this work. Again, illegal crude oil refining refers to the unlicensed or unauthorized act of providing petroleum services for a ship or any other supply outlet. It also means black market sale of petroleum products which clearly falls outside the official or legally defined or recognized market by law for the sale of such product in Nigeria today.

The Emergence of Petroleum Prospecting in Nigeria

The advent of petroleum prospecting in Nigeria can be traced back to 1908, when a German entity, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation commenced exploration activities in the Araromi are of Western Nigeria. The outbreak of the World 1 in 1914 adversely affected these pioneering efforts and they were doomed to extinction. The Shell D'Arcy (the forerunner of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria) resumed oil prospecting in 1937 when it was awarded the sole concessionary rights covering the whole territory of Nigeria. The World War 11 also interrupted their activities but they resumed in 1947. With concerted efforts, after several years and an investment of over N30 million, the first commercial oil was discovered in 1956 at Oloibiri in present Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta Region. This discovery opened up the oil industry in 1961 in Nigeria, bringing in Mobil, Agip, Safrag (now EIF), Tenneco and Amoseas (Texaco and Chevron, respectively) to petroleum prospecting both in the onshore/offshore area of Nigeria. This translated to the extension of the concessionary rights previously monopolized by Shell to the new entrants.

Consequently, oil production and export from the Oloibiri Oil filed started in earnest in 1958 with an initial production volume of 5,100 barrels of crude oil per day. As more players came unto the oil prospecting scene, the production rose to 2.1 million barrels per day in 1972 and a peaking at 2.4 million barrels per day in 1979. Earlier in 1972, Nigeria was ranked the 7th major oil producer in the World and has since grown to the 12th largest oil producing country in the World today. But currently the largest oil producing country in Africa, with Akwa Ibom State being the largest State in Nigeria. According to the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), (2005), "the core producing areas cover some 60% of the total average of about 31.105 square kilometres of which the Niger Delta area has 606 oil fiels-355 are onshore while the remaining 251 are offshore. Of these, 193 are currently operational while 23 have been shut or abandoned as a result of poor prospectively or total drying up of the wells" The NNPC (2005), also revealed that a total of 28 exploratory oil wells have been drilled all showing various levels of prospectively and these include two (2) in Anambra state, one (1) each in Edo and Benue States, and twenty-four (24) in the Chad Basin. The NNPC further confirmed that production is yet to commence from any of the foregoing discovery wells. This implies that petroleum prospecting in Nigeria still remains a Niger Delta affairs. However, the NNPC reports shows that already over 900 million barrels of crude oil of recoverable reserves have been identified and the Nigerian Government has also set a target to achiever a reserve of 40 billion barrels in future.

This monopoly of technology and attendant concessionary rights as well as control of the means of production enjoyed by the multi-national oil companies in the Nigerian capitalist system have compelled both the people of Niger Delta and the Nigerian State to rely on the proceeds from the extractive oil industry for survival. The nexus amongst the tripod oil companies, oil-bearing people of Niger Delta and the Nigerian State, therefore, explains the material conditions and economic realities of which all the stakeholders fine themselves, their conflicting values and the factor of violence which appears to be melting point of their relationship, as every stakeholder in the tripartite interest has at one time or the other restored to the use of violence in driving home its interest. The disparity of interest and the existing conflictual relationship amongst them further explain monopolies each of the stakeholders enjoys, viz: the multi-national companies enjoy the monopoly of technology of oil production; the Niger Delta Region enjoys the monopoly of oil-bearing; while the Nigerian Government enjoys the monopoly of State power. Thus, it is as against this background the cradle of the Niger Delta crisis and attendant State violence can be better understood, analyzed and consummated.

4. The Theoretical Framework

This paper chose, explain and adopted "Dialectical materialism" as postulated by Claude Ake. What therefore, is this approach all about and why is it strong, desirable and relevant to this paper. The paradigm, dialectical materialism derived its theoretical foundation from the Marxian analysis which deals with a wide range of social phenomena-their past, present and future as well. Dialectical Materialism according to Borisov and Libman (1985:10), is the theoretical sum up by Marx and Eagles of the achievements of all previous philosophies of natural science of their time whereby they efficiently combined the materialist doctrine with the dialectical method (a method of scientific cognition that regards reality in its development and contradictions) create a totally new philosophy which reveals the universal laws of the development of nature, society and human thought.

Marxist analysis starts with a distinction between "base" (substructure) and 'superstructure'. The building like metaphor is employed to postulate that the economic structure of society (which represents the base) is responsible for creating and transforming its social structure, political, legal, religion, and moral, etc. (which represent the superstructure). Marx expressed the foregoing central idea in Marxian analysis which is the root of our theoretical framework of analysis, "dialectical materialism".

Claude Ake (1981:1), in his work, "A political Economy of Africa" directly informed our choice of this theoretical framework of analysis and as such, deserves at least a cursory look. Ake clearly identifies three major characteristics as the contours of the theory of "dialectical materialism" (1) the primacy of material conditions (2) the dynamic character of reality (3) the relatedness of different elements of society.

Ake refers to the theory as a method which gives primacy to material conditions, particularly economic factors, in the explanation of social life. He further explains that economic need is man's most fundamental need, and unless man is able to meet this need, he cannot exist in the first place. He argues that man must eat before he can do anything else, such as worship, pursue culture or become an economist, etc. He contends that it is by man's productive activity that he is able to obtain the economic means which he needs to sustain life.

Ake (1981:1), further dramatically puts it that "it is true that man does not live by bread alone, but it is a more fundamental truth that man cannot live without bread". Thus, he concludes that the methodological implication of the foregoing analysis on the 'primacy of material conditions' for a student of society is that he must pay particular attention to the economic structure of society and indeed use it as the point of departure for studying other aspects of society. In his words;

*Once we understand what the material assets and
Constraints of a society are, how the society produces
Goods to meet its material needs. How he goods are
Distributed, and what types of social relations arise
From the organization of production, we have come
A long way to understanding the culture of that society,
Its religious system. Its political system and even its
Modes of thought.*

Ake (1981:1), concludes that the connectedness of the economic structure, social structure, brief system and political system demands an interdisciplinary approach to the study of society. Thus, he posits that the dialectical method and our attention to material conditions allow us to move in an orderly manner between the elements of the social system, to delineate the relations between them and the logic of their metamorphosis.

From the forgoing highpoints of the theory of dialectical materialism with reference to material conditions best explain Niger Delta crisis, illegal crude oil refining and its numerous challenges as it metamorphosis from mere agitation for provision of social amenities to state creation, and from peaceful demonstrations for more revenue allocation and resource control to stoppage of oil companies from operation, vandalism of oil installations to hostage-taking of expatriate workers, as well as kidnapping of children, parents and relatives of expatriate workers, indigenous political office holders, traditional rulers, and now illegal crude oil refining activities. In the Niger Delta, consistent perceived feelings of injustice and continued marginalization over the years amidst widespread poverty remains some of the widely held reasons and motivation for illicit socio-economic activities.

Finally, this theoretical framework therefore underpins the different stages of development and the corresponding modes of production that prevailed in the Niger Delta Region and the attendant class struggles between the two antagonistic classes-the dominant class and the dominated class, which gradually caused what we are facing today in the Niger Delta Region.

The Problems of Illegal Refining of Crude Oil in Niger Delta Region

More than anyone can think and image, the problems created by illegal crude oil refining in the Niger Delta region is at the public domain, and has attracted serious attention from all well-meaning individuals, institution within and outside the shore of Nigeria. Notwithstanding, most of the discussions on this subject matter has showed that illegal refining of crude oil has negative problem on human health and our physical environment. There are three critical and mutually reinforcing areas that the political economy of crude oil governance in Nigeria which allows for illegal oil refining generates negative problems.

These are; the social, economic and environmental problems. While this is not our focus on this paper, it is also worthy of note that, coincidentally, these three areas reflect on the tripod of economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability, which altogether reflect the focus of sustainable development in general. Above, in our statement of problem, we attempted to provide insights and overview into how illegal crude oil refining has adversely affected the tripod of sustainability in Nigeria.

Economic Problems

Looking at cost analysis of illegal crude oil refining in the Niger Delta region, it will show that the cost far outweighs what may be considered as benefit to some people in the society. The illicit trade of crude oil refining of petroleum products may benefit some of our brothers, facts suggests that the negative problems for the

country viewing it from an economic angle, social and environmental stand point, are very dangerous and harmful. Firstly, from the angle of its economic problems, it is clear that illegal crude oil refining creates huge loss on our revenue, as the country cry for drop on revenue generation daily. By history and records, illegal crude oil refining of petroleum products steadily reduces the revenue of the multinational companies as well as the country in general, remember these multinationals pay revenue to government of Nigeria, which will enable the government to carry out dividend of democracy to the people. Worthy of note, this loss of revenue happens in two dimensions, the first is the direct cost that is associated with shortage of products when they are illegally removed from pipelines, wellheads or flow stations. The second dimension of cost is that of repairs of damaged pipelines as well as other related facilities by the companies. Looking at the economic cost of illegal refining of crude oil in the Niger Delta, Akpan, (2016) stated that the country loses as much as #10.75billion every month to criminal syndicates of crude oil and illegal refined petroleum products thieves operating actively in the swamps of the Niger Delta, and offshore, in Nigeria's territorial waters. Again, the massive black-market business in crude and refined products in Nigeria continue to reduce the revenue of huge multinational corporations such as SPDC and the Federal Government that could ordinarily have been used for the provision of infrastructures and other related services to citizens. For example, Nigeria lost approximately \$46.16 billion between 2007 and 2020 due to oil theft, while in 2022 alone; losses were at least \$2.1 billion. These losses to illegal operations contribute to reduced government revenue and increased insecurity, impacting economic growth in the affected regions.

In a related development, the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) said it uncovered 55 illegal refineries and 29 illegal pipeline connections in one week across the Niger Delta region, this was made public in a video documentary on the official YouTube Channel of the NNPCL, the company said it recorded a total of 179 incidents of oil theft in the region January 21st 2025.

Social Problems

This is one of the major focus of this paper. Ordinarily social problem cannot be measured or ascertain monetarily in value, like the economic problem discussed above. Without been told or informed, social problems or social dynamics are involved as a result of the new era we find ourselves because of illegal crude oil refining in the Niger Delta region today. History and records has showed us several fight for spatial control by different groups and camps trying to take over or control territories where their illegal crude oil refineries are located or situated in different communities in Niger Delta region. Regrettably and unfortunately, this unnecessary and surprising battle of supremacy takes higher levels day-by-day with sophisticated weapons been deployed causing the death of many promising youths who champion the fight, and those who are unconnected to the battle within the zone. Most times, loss of lives are not involved, but properties worth millions of naira are burnt down, at time both lives and properties loss together causing untold hardship to the casualties, raping of girls during situations like this are common, business men and women loss their hard earned goods bought costing in this glopping inflation period, this is a regular occurrence today in a natural resources blessed region called Niger Delta.

Put differently, putting the social problems associated with illegal crude oil refining, other issues also involved which is noted limited to creating what we refer as sudden new social class relation which is very dangerous at the level of the communities. Girls or women are taking over by this sudden new social class of individuals in our communities, men who genuinely desire them know longer have access to them again, remember this people make money through the illegal business, majority of our present day girls or women prefer money to decent character in our society. Shockingly, most of the youths involved in this illegal business confused our traditional institutions, bribe them and collect chieftaincy titles and get recognition by traditional councils in Niger Delta region today.

By so doing, they preside over affairs of their communities were illegal crude oil activities are going on daily without interference from anybody or group of persons. For example, in Rivers State some well-known warlords and illegal crude oil bunkers are Kings or First Class Chiefs recognized by Government of Rivers State, they attend the meeting of the apex Rivers State traditional council of chiefs. By implication, illegal crude oil refining will continue to spread in Niger Delta region, more youths will definitely get involved, sudden new social class and ill-gotten wealth continue to emerge and guns, warlords, criminality, and chiefs without conscious remain in our various communities as traditional rulers, opinion leaders in Niger Delta region.

Environmental Problems

Everybody is aware that the main environmental problems in the Niger Delta are caused by oil exploration and extraction activities leading to oil spill gas flaring, deforestation and water pollution that contaminate soil, air, and water. These activities have steadily destroyed ecosystems, caused severe flooding and soil erosion, depleted fish (aquatic) populations, led to food scarcity and insecurity, which contributed to climate change.

Illegal crude oil refining and sabotage has also worsened the problem day-by-day by releasing hazardous waste and oil into the environment. The first stage at which illegal crude oil activities constitute negative impact with regard to the environment is through the oil spill. For example, Odaloun (2016), is of the view that the process of breaking, vandalizing and tapping crude oil or refined petroleum products from installations may lead to the damage of oil pipelines which further increases the potential for leakages that cause immense environmental degradation. The use of rudimentary methods by those involved in illegal crude oil almost always guarantees that oil will be spilled into the environment with deleterious problems for human and animal lives. Also, apart from the spills illegal crude oil refining, from pipeline vandalism to the process of refining also comes with heavy wastage of crude oil which find their way into the soil or river causing severe damage to the environment. It is a common knowledge that most part of Niger Delta region, their major source of drinking and bathing water comes from the river and creek around their homes. In fact, an average Niger Delta person enjoy and derive pleasure in bathing inside the river than using pocket to bath inside bathroom in the house.

5. Conclusion

The front burner of academic space in Nigeria today has been taken over with the discuss of illegal refining of crude oil in Niger Delta and it related matters, this is despite the efforts of successive governments at all levels. The problem it has caused is largely affecting not just the oil companies, government, but also individuals in Niger Delta Region and Nigeria at large. From all indications, what we are experiencing today called illegal refining of crude oil started as a result of poverty, hunger, environmental degradation, and unemployment by the youths in Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The youths believed that Federal Government has failed woefully in their responsibility to provide jobs for them, and social amenities, just to but few. Now, they resorted to illegal refining of crude oil as means of livelihood, empowerment and sustainer.

In addition, despite the fact that this illegal refining of crude oil activities are ongoing steadily in the Niger Delta region which is seriously affecting the economic, social and environmental aspect of the region, and Nigeria in general, not all the youth of the region are involved in this criminal act, because the problems illegal refining of crude oil has caused is far on the negative side than the benefits, especially the social problems which has created room for gang wars for territories supremacy, cultism, emergency of new set of people with ill-gotten wealth that disrespect constituted authorities, cause all sort of conflicts in the communities, and Niger Delta region at large.

Finally, the rich class in the Niger Delta region has always utilized their position as advantage to exploit the people of Niger Delta, at such deliberately causing more suffering to their people in conjunction with Federal Government and Multi-National Companies (MNC) in the region. This has been on for decades and more, which has increased the problems instead of looking for a sustainable solution for peace in the region. There is no single example in history to support the idea that violence brings development. Violence begets violence and reduces the quality of life for those affected. While government, at all levels, must expedite action aimed at redressing the crying developmental needs of the Niger Delta Region with the seriousness it deserves, the various armed gangs, owners of illegal refining dumps, agitators and their sponsors must know that the pervading state of environmental damages, insecurity in the area cannot contribute to the accelerated development that we all need.

6. Recommendations

From the above discussions of this paper, we make the following recommendations as a way forward for sustainable peace and to mitigate the issues of illegal refining of crude oil in Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Aggressive efforts should be made by government at all levels (local, state, and federal) with or without any special intervention development commission to tackle the age-long problems of gross underdevelopment in Niger Delta region by way of providing basic amenities such as roads, drinkable water, hospitals, etc towards satisfying at least the physiological needs of the vast majority of the people in the region.

Rural communities and ethnic nationalities in Niger Delta should shun violence and always resort to peaceful means of settlement of disputes other than illegal refining of crude oil activities that is seriously destroying the environment more and more daily.

Urgent/constant remediation and environmental protection of Niger Delta region by Federal Government and it collaborators should take place genuinely without bias or politics, clean all the oil spills, restore the ecological harm done as a result of oil exploration in the region.

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