

Oil Exploitation and the Accentuation of Intergroup Conflicts in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The paper examines the view that oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta, Nigeria has strained intra and intergroup relations in the oil bearing enclave of the area. It seeks to evaluate how the oil industry- induced conflicts in the region have impeded the sustainable development of the area. The study makes use of both primary and secondary sources of information and data to analyze the issues in contention. The findings of the study showed that the discovery of crude oil and its consequent exploitation has radically altered the hitherto pattern of intergroup relations in the Niger Delta. Relationship is now characterized by violence, communal crises and the emerging economy of conflict. The author suggests the need to nip in the bud this disturbing development by creating jobs for the idle hands in the region. The government should as a matter of priority, integrate the people of the region into the mainstream of the petroleum industry. The study concludes that the people of the region should be re-orientated from feeling that the only means to earn money is to threaten oil operators. More importantly is the need to enact new law on property rights in the region which will take care of the interest of the people of the oil producing communities. This is so because if the people of the region are part owners of the oil industry, the feeling of alienation would be ameliorated and this could also reduce the spate of sabotage of oil installations in the area.