

Committee: Group of 20 (G20)

Topic: Rehabilitating the Niger Delta from oil spillage and pollution

Student Officer: Diamantis Madias

Position: Deputy President

Topic Introduction

Significant pollution and oil spills have severely degraded the ecosystem of an important region in Nigeria, the Niger Delta. Since this problem is essential to local and global environmental health, restoration actions must be undertaken immediately. Addressing such environmental catastrophes is in line with the General Assembly's (GA) mandates on human rights, climate action, and sustainable development. The causes and effects of oil contamination in the Niger Delta will be examined in this study guide, with a focus on the socioeconomic and ecological repercussions. We will look at both local and global solutions, emphasizing the GA's contribution to cooperation and the provision of resources for efficient repair. Identifying stakeholders, evaluating previous and current rehabilitation efforts, and suggesting legislation and workable solutions will be the main areas of concentration. The goal here is to make an understanding of the issue at hand and promote a long-term sustainable recovery in the Niger Delta.

Definition of key concepts

Gas flaring

The burning of natural gas associated with oil extraction, the process of burning off excess natural gas that is produced during oil extraction. This practice is often used when it's not economically viable to capture and transport the gas for use or sale. While flaring is a common method for managing excess gas, it has several significant drawbacks¹

¹"What is Gas Flaring?" *World Bank Group*, www.worldbank.org/en/programs/gasflaringreduction/gas-flaring-explained. Accessed 04 July 2024.



Environmental Degradation

A process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment²

Remediation Process

Involves an all-encompassing step process of land restoration from detection, investigation, assessment, determination of remedial measures, and actual clean-up, to site redevelopment.³

The Niger Delta

A vast and ecologically sensitive region in southern Nigeria, characterized by its rich biodiversity, complex network of rivers and mangroves, and significant oil reserves. It is one of the most oil-rich areas in Africa and has been the center of Nigeria's oil industry for decades. However, this abundance of natural resources has also brought significant challenges and conflicts.⁴

Background Information

Geographical Location

Situated in southern Nigeria, the Niger Delta⁵ spans an area of roughly 70,000 square kilometers⁶. It is one of the world's greatest river deltas, built by sediment from the Niger River as it flows into the Atlantic Ocean. The Niger Delta's biodiverse ecosystem is crucial for local livelihoods, global biodiversity, and environmental stability. Threatened by extensive oil pollution, its mangroves and freshwater swamps sustain unique species and support communities dependent on fishing and agriculture. Preservation is vital to safeguard ecosystem services like clean water and climate regulation, benefiting both local resilience and global biodiversity.

Population

²"General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus." *Environmental Degradation*, www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/15154#:~:text=Definition,or%20caused%20by%20human%20activities. Accessed 04 July 2024.

³ *The Main Three Types of Environmental Remediation and Reclamation - Anderson Engineering*. 25 Feb. 2021, www.andersoneng.com/the-main-three-types-of-environmental-remediation-and-reclamation/#:~:text=Remediation%20involves%20an%20all%2Dencompassing.

⁴ Wikipedia Contributors. "Niger Delta." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Oct. 2019, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta.

⁵ "Niger Delta." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 Jul. 2024, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta.

⁶ "Niger Delta." *Wikipedia*, 4 July 2024, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#:~:text=10%20External%20links-. Accessed 21 July 2024.



The Niger Delta is home to over 30 million people, the Niger Delta encompasses more than 40 ethnic groups. Despite the region's resource wealth, many communities face significant challenges, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and severe environmental degradation this shows that it's already an unstable community and the oil spills are only worsening the situations THEREFORE this issue is of major importance.

Economic Significance

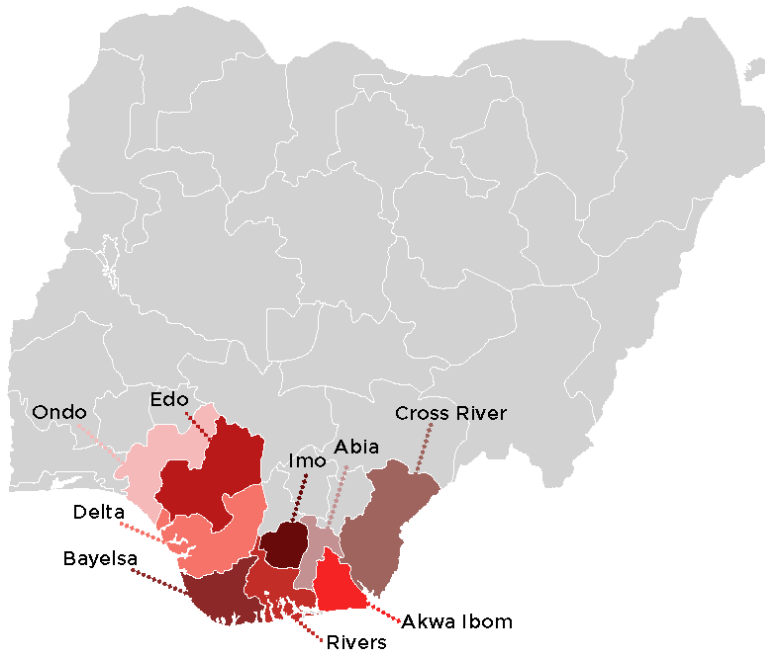
The economic significance of oil spillage and pollution in the Niger Delta is profound, affecting both local communities and the broader national economy. Locally, oil spills have a devastating impact on livelihoods. Many residents depend on fishing and agriculture, which are directly threatened by contaminated water and soil. This contamination leads to reduced fish stocks and lower crop yields, resulting in lost income and economic hardship for local farmers and fishermen. Additionally, the health impacts of pollution, such as respiratory and skin diseases, impose significant costs on individuals and communities, further straining their economic stability.

The damage to natural resources from oil spills also has considerable economic repercussions. Environmental degradation from spills destroys crucial ecosystems like mangroves and wetlands, which diminishes biodiversity and negatively affects industries such as tourism and agriculture. The financial burden of remediation—cleaning up spills and restoring damaged environments—is substantial, placing a strain on both public and private resources. These costs can be a significant economic drain, impacting long-term environmental management and development efforts.

For the oil industry itself, spills lead to increased operational costs. Companies must allocate resources for cleanup, face potential fines, and deal with legal liabilities, all of which can impact profitability. Persistent pollution issues also raise investment risks, potentially deterring future investment and increasing insurance premiums. This can affect the industry's overall efficiency and



attractiveness to investors, further influencing economic performance.



7

In this image, the areas in the Niger Delta are being depicted, the broader national economic impact is also notable. Oil is a critical source of revenue for Nigeria, and disruptions in production caused by spills can lead to fluctuations in national revenue and economic instability. Furthermore, the economic disparities between the wealth generated from oil extraction and the local communities' limited benefits can contribute to social unrest and conflict. This instability not only affects the Niger Delta but can also hinder broader economic growth and development in Nigeria, impacting the nation's overall economic performance and international standing.

Causes of Oil Spillage and Pollution

Oil spills and pollution are major environmental issues in the Niger Delta, caused by a variety of factors including pipeline and equipment failure⁸, sabotage and vandalism, operational negligence, and illegal refineries. Oil spills are frequently caused by aging infrastructure, poor maintenance, and insufficient safety precautions, while militants and local residents occasionally sabotage pipelines

⁷ Overview of the Niger Delta <https://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/the-niger-delta/>

⁸ Aduloju, Bunmi. "INSIGHT: How Sabotage, Equipment Failure Caused over 4000 Cases of Oil Spills in Six Years." *TheCable*, 23 Apr. 2022, www.thecable.ng/insight-how-sabotage-equipment-failure-caused-over-4000-cases-of-oil-spills-in-six-years/.

and facilities to steal oil, causing additional environmental damage. Oil companies' poor operational practices and failure to adhere to international standards contribute to accidental spills, while the proliferation of illegal refineries in the region results in frequent spills and pollution as crude oil is processed in unregulated and unsafe conditions.

Environmental and Social Impact

The effects of oil spills and pollution in the Niger Delta are severe, including environmental degradation, health difficulties, economic damage, and civil unrest. Oil spills contaminate land, water bodies, and wetlands, harming agricultural and aquatic ecosystems, causing biodiversity loss, and disturbing local residents' livelihoods. The local population is exposed to contaminated water and air pollution as a result of gas flaring and oil spills, which causes respiratory problems, skin illnesses, and other health issues⁹. Pollution harms agriculture and fishing¹⁰, which are traditional vocations in the region, causing economic hardship for many communities. Furthermore, environmental deterioration and economic disparities have spurred regional tensions and militancy, with local groups demanding a fair share of the oil revenue and improved environmental policies.

<u>1956</u>	Oil was discovered in Oloibiri, marking the start of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta
<u>1970-1990</u>	Numerous oil spills have taken place, causing significant environmental and social damage

⁹ United Nations. "Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland." *Unep.org*, 2022, wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7947, <https://doi.org/978-92-807-3130-9>.

¹⁰ Van Lohuizen, Kadir. *PETROLEUM, POLLUTION and POVERTY in the NIGER DELTA a HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT IS a HUMAN RIGHT*.



<u>2011</u>	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) ¹¹ released a report about the severe pollution in Ogoniland.
<u>2012</u>	The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) ¹² initiated programs to address the environmental issues and promote sustainable development
<u>2016</u>	The Nigerian government launched the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) ¹³ to implement UNEP's recommendations for cleaning up Ogoniland.
<u>2017</u>	The official start of the cleanup project
<u>2023</u>	Increased advocacy and awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of environmental protection in the Niger Delta.
<u>2024</u>	Implementation of better monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress and impact of rehabilitation efforts.

¹¹ UNEP. "About the United Nations Environment Programme." UNEP - UN Environment Programme, 2023, www.unep.org/who-we-are/about-us.

¹² "Niger Delta Development Commission." Wikipedia, 29 Aug. 2023, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Development_Commission.

¹³ "About HYPREP – FEDERAL MINISTRY of ENVIRONMENT." HYPREP - about Us, hyrep.gov.ng/about-us/.

Major countries/ organizations and alliances

Nigeria

Nigeria, as the country directly affected by oil spillage and pollution in the Niger Delta, is actively engaged in addressing these issues through several measures. The Nigerian government has established regulatory bodies like the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) to oversee and manage oil spill response and environmental restoration efforts. Additionally, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) works on projects aimed at improving infrastructure, environmental management, and community development in the region. The government also collaborates with international organizations and private companies to enhance oil spill response capabilities and promote sustainable practices.¹⁴

United States

The United States contributes to addressing oil spillage and pollution in the Niger Delta through several key avenues. U.S. government agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provide funding and technical support for environmental cleanup projects and capacity-building initiatives. American companies and NGOs are involved in implementing advanced technologies for oil spill response and environmental restoration. Additionally, the U.S. engages in diplomatic and collaborative efforts to promote sustainable practices and regulatory improvements in the oil industry.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom contributes to rehabilitating the Niger Delta from oil spillage and pollution through various channels. The UK provides technical expertise and support in oil spill response and environmental management, often through partnerships with local organizations and international agencies. British firms and NGOs are involved in projects aimed at improving cleanup technologies, environmental monitoring, and sustainable practices. Additionally, the UK government

14

Nigeria's intervention
<https://reports.shell.com/sustainability-report/2019/special-reports/spill-prevention-and-response-in-nigeria.html>



and its development agencies offer financial aid and support for initiatives focused on environmental rehabilitation and community development in the Niger Delta.¹⁵

Netherlands

The Netherlands contributes to addressing oil spillage and pollution in regions like the Niger Delta primarily through its advanced technology and expertise in environmental management. Dutch companies and institutions provide innovative solutions for oil spill response and sustainable practices, helping to improve cleanup efforts and waste management. Additionally, the Netherlands engages in development cooperation programs that may include environmental protection projects in Nigeria.¹⁶

OPEC

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) plays a more indirect role in addressing oil spillage and pollution in regions like the Niger Delta. While OPEC's primary focus is on regulating oil production and prices among member countries, it does promote industry best practices and sustainability through its initiatives. OPEC's involvement in environmental issues generally includes encouraging member countries to adopt cleaner technologies and improve environmental management within the oil sector.¹⁷

Russia

Russia's direct role in rehabilitating the Niger Delta from oil spillage and pollution is minimal. However, Russian involvement may occur through indirect support, such as participating in international environmental initiatives or bilateral agreements that promote sustainable practices and technological exchange aimed at improving oil spill response and pollution management in the region.¹⁸

¹⁵ UK's involvement
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/nov/23/shell-to-face-human-rights-claims-uk-over-chronic-oil-spills-niger-delta>

¹⁶ <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-061.pdf>

¹⁷ ("Organization Of The Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) | JODI." *Joint Organisations Data Initiative*, <https://www.jodidata.org/about-jodi/partners/opec.aspx>. Accessed 9 July 2024.

¹⁸ Impact of Oil Spillage on Economic Development of Niger Delta- Nigeria

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381925802_Impact_of_Oil_Spillage_on_Economic_Development_of_Niger_Delta- Nigeria



Previous attempts to solve the issue

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)

MOSOP, founded in 1990 and led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, rose to prominence as an environmental and human rights advocacy organization. The organization strongly opposed the environmental damage caused by oil extraction activities and advocated for greater autonomy and equitable revenue sharing for the Ogoni people. MOSOP's efforts brought international attention to the plight of Niger Delta communities and the negative consequences of oil exploitation.¹⁹

Possible solutions

Enhancing Regulatory Structures

Improving Law at the National Level:

Improving Nigeria's environmental laws is critical to addressing pollution in the Niger Delta. This includes updating regulations, engaging communities, and forming an independent regulatory body with trained personnel. Noncompliance should result in fines, criminal liability, mandatory clean-ups, and license revocation. These measures will contribute to a cleaner and more sustainable Niger Delta.

International Standards and Compliance:

To improve compliance with global environmental standards in the Niger Delta, we should strengthen partnerships with international organizations and enforce adherence to agreements such as the Paris Agreement²⁰. This time, prioritize rigorous monitoring, clear incentives, and open reporting to ensure consistent and effective results.

Promoting Corporate Responsibility

¹⁹ "Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)." ESCR-Net, www.escr-net.org/member/movement-survival-ogoni-people-mosop.

²⁰ "The Paris Agreement." United Nations, 2015, www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement.



To ensure that businesses in the Niger Delta adhere to high environmental and social standards, develop and enforce CSR guidelines²¹. Encourage investment in community development and environmental protection, create a certification program for companies meeting high standards, and promote public reporting of their environmental and social performance.

Bibliography

Amnesty International. *A Criminal Enterprise? Shell's Involvement in Human Rights Violations in Nigeria in the 1990s*. Amnesty International, 2017.

Ebiede, Tarila Marclint. "Conflict Drivers: Environmental Degradation, Ethnic Rivalry and Illegal Oil Bunkering in the Niger Delta." *African Security Review*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2017, pp. 182-196.

Henshaw, Imoh. "The Niger Delta: Environmental Degradation, Conflict, and the Oil Economy." *Environmental Justice in the Global South*, edited by Carmen G. Gonzalez, Sumudu A. Atapattu, and Sara L. Seck, Cambridge University Press, 2020, pp. 195-214.

Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment. *Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (EGASPIN)*. Revised Edition, Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment, 2018.

Ogwu, Fredrick A., and Harrison I. Atagana. "Remediation of Polluted Environments in the Niger Delta: Options for Sustainable Environmental Clean-up." *Journal of Environmental Management*, vol. 203, 2017, pp. 1030-1038.

Shell Nigeria. "Sustainability Report 2022." Shell Nigeria, 2022, www.shell.com.ng/sustainability/environment.html.

²¹ "What Is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?" HEC Paris, [www.hec.edu/en/faculty-research/centers/sustainability-organizations-institute/think/so-institute-executive-factsheets/what-corporate-social-responsibility-csr#:~:text=Corporate%20Social%20Responsibility%20\(CSR\)%20is](http://www.hec.edu/en/faculty-research/centers/sustainability-organizations-institute/think/so-institute-executive-factsheets/what-corporate-social-responsibility-csr#:~:text=Corporate%20Social%20Responsibility%20(CSR)%20is).



United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland*. UNEP, 2011.

Watts, Michael. "The Rule of Oil: Petro-Politics and the Anatomy of an Insurgency." *Niger Delta Economies of Violence*, vol. 2, 2007, pp. 1-12.

"IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria: Version 3.1." *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*, 2012, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-061.pdf>. Accessed 31 July 2024.

