

deal with. But a forest judged to be a threat to security is relatively easy to destroy. This is why, from the point of view of the authorities in the region, pushing back the forest represents –at least temporarily– progress towards peace and development.

Conclusion

In times of conflict, forest areas have the particular characteristic of representing a space whose measured value depends on at least two different perceptions: 1) the forest as a place that produces a prized resource, wood; 2) the forest as a particular space whose structure and organisation (mainly tree density) provides better cover than others for hiding places. However, a forest which provides a good hiding place for some represents a threat to others.

In the two examples given above, the insecurity of the wooded areas does not lead to the same effects. In the Kenyan case, insecurity of the bush hinders access to wood resources or makes it problematic. In the Ugandan example, the danger of the forest encourages its programmed destruction. Herein lies the lesson to remember: insecurity does not provide protection against forest destruction, it can accelerate or postpone forest destruction in specific ways.

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NIGERIA: ARMED CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA

By Samuel A. Igbatayo

The Niger Delta is one of the world's largest wetlands, covering an area of 20,000km² in Southern Nigeria with an annual rainfall in the range 3,000mm to 4,500mm. The Niger Delta lies at the heart of the tropical rain forest, with enormous biological diversity, featuring unique plants and animals. Ecologically, the Niger Delta comprises four zones: coastal barrier islands, mangroves, fresh water swamp forests, and lowland rain forests. (Darah, 2001).

Political Economy

The Niger Delta, in recent times, has become a strategic region in Nigeria's social, political and economic framework. Due to the region's huge endowment in hydrocarbons, the Niger Delta now commands a dominant position in Nigeria's political economy, raising the stakes for the region's indigenous peoples, as well as Governments at the Local, State and Federal levels. The Niger Delta has contributed the bulk of revenue that accrues to the Federal Government over the past three decades, through the huge reserves of crude oil and gas discovered in the region. (Van Buren, 2001).

However, the development profile of the Niger Delta presents a paradox: despite the abundant natural resources prevalent in the region, the area is undermined by endemic poverty and its people are ranked among the poorest in the world. The emergence of poverty in the midst of plenty in the Niger

Delta, particularly in the last decade, has unsettled the region, presenting policy makers with challenges that threaten to overwhelm social equity, political stability and sustainable development. This development holds dire consequences for the region's forest, which have provided the poor with the livelihood opportunities.

The emergence of armed conflict

Since the 1990's, the Niger Delta has degenerated into a dangerous theatre of violent conflict, sustained by ethnic militias, tribal warlords and misguided youths. Socio-Political and ethnic strife in the Niger Delta, including violence, kidnapping, sabotage and seizure of oil facilities have become a recurring decimal in the unfolding tragedy of the region. Ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, including the Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw have battled one another over local governance and the control of natural resources, resulting in the maiming and killing of innocent people, including women and children. Often, entire villages were attacked and razed down, with heavy loss of lives and property (DOE, 2002). Nigeria's prolonged military rule (abolished in 1999) has been blamed for the escalation of violent conflict in the Niger Delta. The military's iron-fisted approach to the challenges of the Niger Delta has fuelled the region's instability, particularly in the mid-1990s, when the leaders of the Ogoni ethnic group were executed for protesting the marginalization and oppression of the ethnic group.

Causes of Conflict

The redistribution of Nigeria's wealth lies at the heart of the violent conflict in the Niger Delta. Since most of the revenue accruing to government in recent times is driven by the oil-led economy, many people in the

troubled region hold a strong view that the region has been marginalized in the redistribution of the nation's wealth. Consequently, political and ethnic leaders of the Niger Delta have been clamouring for natural resource control and devolution of power away from the Federal Government in favour of States and Local Governments to spur development at the local level, which has been marginalized in the current scheme of things (Igbatayo, 2001).

Communities in the Niger Delta have also been in conflict with oil producing companies in the region over allegations of widespread oil spillage and gas laring, which have undermined livelihoods and exacerbated their impoverished conditions. This negative trend has angered communities in the Niger Delta, provoking armed conflict, seizure of oil companies' personnel, as well as their facilities.

Impact on Forest Resources

Armed conflict in the Niger Delta has combined with unsustainable human activities to devastate forest resources, with grave implications for the region's fragile environment. The instability posed by armed conflict, particularly in rural areas, has created fertile grounds for some elements to fell wood and set fire to forests for selfish economic gains. Consequently, there has been a rapid decline in the nature and scope of forest cover in the Niger Delta. Also, the quality of the forest resources has been undermined, posing a threat to the region's biological diversity. Already, many plants and animal species have been lost in the region, with serious consequences to the environment and the food chain.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are

proffered to control armed conflict in the Niger Delta and also regenerate the region's dwindling forest resources.

- **Political Dialogue:** The Federal Government should engage the people of the region in a sustained and honest dialogue, and create mutual trust and confidence, which would allow it to address the grievances of the people in the troubled region.
- **Community Development:** Oil producing companies operating in the Niger Delta should accelerate community development by alleviating poverty and promoting social equity. They should also adopt best practices approach to oil exploration and production, minimizing oil spillage and abolishing gas flaring.
- **Reforestation:** Government should initiate re-forestation programmes aimed at restoring the region's forest cover already lost to unsustainable human activities.

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NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN “POST-CONFLICT” MOZAMBIQUE AND ETHIOPIA

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The Marena¹ project researched the impact of conflict(s) on local resource management practices and national level policies in Mozambique and Ethiopia. Research took place in 1999 and 2000, in numerous case study areas, and was carried out by researchers from Mozambique, Ethiopia, and the UK. Fieldwork methods included household surveys and in-depth interviews, collection of grey literature, participant observation in communities, and exchange of findings with other researchers.

Findings touched on a wide range of issues: the notion of post-conflict; stakeholder relationships; how government policy is influenced by the post-conflict context; examples of land tenure policies for natural resource management; state and community forests; participatory plans