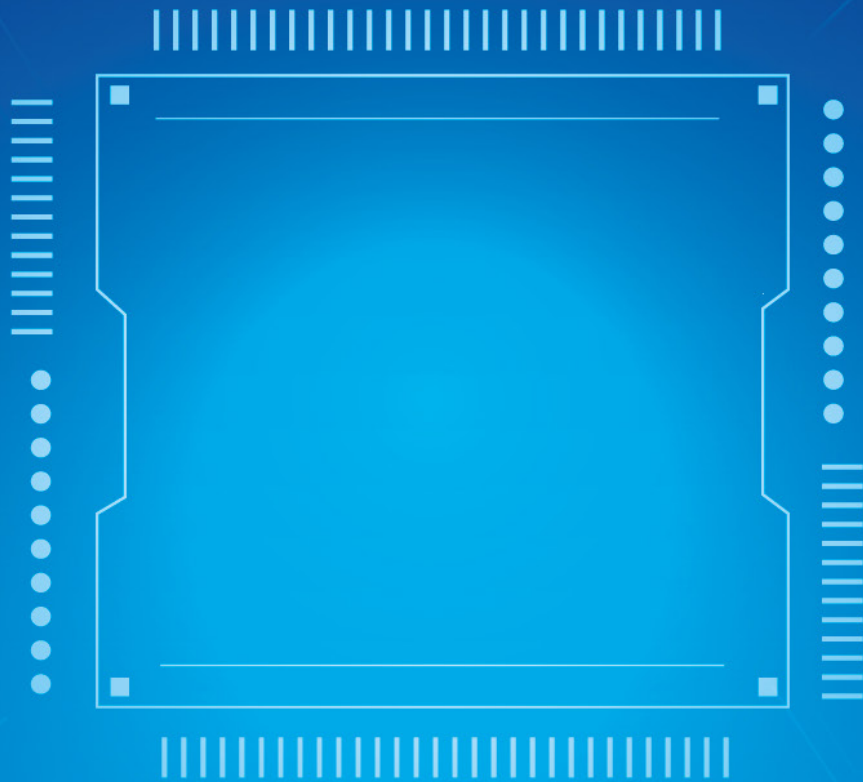




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Effects and Causes of Illegal Crude Oil Bunkering in Nigeria: Case Study Niger Delta

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ABSTRACT

Illegal bunkering of crude oil includes stealing crude oil as well as its derivatives through diverse mechanism without the permission of the Federal government. Crude oil blasts and spillages are common occurrences in Niger Delta area, due to illegal bunkering of crude oil. This paper investigates the causes and effects of illegal bunkering of crude oil in Niger Delta area, which has become a major threat in the environment and the Nigerian economy in recent time. Opuama, Igbomotoru, and Diebu Communities are all in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area (SILGA), Bayelsa State, Niger Delta province. Over 90 people (both men and women), ranging in age from 18 to 90, were interviewed to gather the primary data. About 30 persons from each community of the age groups of 18 - 30, 31 - 50, and 51 - 90 years were interviewed, which focused mainly on effects of unauthorized bunkering of crude oil on human health, and its environment. Every investigation and data that were gotten from the three communities has negative health impact on people and the environment. These illegal bunkering of crude oil activities has caused poverty to many people in these communities with health, environmental, and economic challenges. The study also discovered that Nigeria has loss revenues that is valued to ₦2.184 trillion per annum, because of illegal bunkering of crude oil. There is poverty in the environment of Niger Delta, high growth of criminal activities with acquiring of weapons, and increase in dropouts from schools, especially students and pupils from secondary and primary school. Possible solutions have been suggested to the issue of crude oil being illegally bunkered. Therefore, each person should work together with government authorities and the operating companies that is responsible for petroleum products in Nigeria in controlling it. Stealing is bad, and let it stop.

INTRODUCTION

Oil and gas geographic expedition started in 1956 in Nigeria, when crude oil was explored in marketable quantity at Oloibiri town, Bayelsa State, Niger Delta Region. Today, with roughly 34.2% of oil and 32% of gas reserves in Africa are from the Niger Delta area. In the Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria becomes the major oil producer and fifth major exporter of petroleum in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Jack *et al.*, 2016). Nigeria depend on the sales of petroleum, and knows how to cope with their economy whatever happened in the global market. As far as the income from petroleum can take care of her people, the government is not boarded of another source of revenue to sustain the economy (Tombari *et al.*, 2020). However, this valuable petroleum is being stolen by some group of persons from the crude oil pipelines and well heads (Tombari *et al.*, 2020).

According to reports, Nigerian government normally lose about 300,000 barrels (bbl) of crude oil each day, because of illegal bunkering that is about 15% of 2.4 million barrels (MMbbl) of crude oil the country produces (Campbell, 2015). When the government's losses from oil theft were calculated and turned it to money, the nation loses about \$1.7 billion every month (Campbell, 2015). Illegal bunkering of crude oil is simply, stealing crude

oil as well as its derivatives through diverse mechanism without the permission of the Federal government. Crude oil is being illegally bunkered in the Niger Delta, oil spills and explosions are frequently experienced due to unlawful bunkering of crude oil (Campbell, 2015). In the last two years, \$360 million has been invested in restoring the Niger Delta by national oil company of Nigeria and its partners in joint venture (Bodo and Gimah, 2020). The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) said, about 70% of the crude oil spills in the last five years was cause by sabotage on their facilities (Campbell, 2015). A report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) said, crude oil contamination has destroyed rivers and streams, killed fishes, polluted groundwater and soil, and also destroyed the vegetation in Ogoni land, environmental evaluation in Rivers State, because of some of these spills, the effects are already very obvious, and there are genuine danger awaits the people (UNEP, 2011). Niger Delta ecology has been impacted by these because to the reduction in arable land and removal of the only source of income for the farming and fishing communities (Bodo and David, 2018). The region's residents are currently dealing with a number of environmental issues, including poor health conditions, inadequate housing facilities; contaminated drinking water sources, barren lands for agriculture, and dead rivers

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for fishing activities (David and Bodo, 2019). This study concentrated on the root causes and detrimental impacts of illegal bunkering of oil in Niger Delta, Nigeria.

Research Problem

In recent times, the government of Nigeria has faced a significant loss of revenue because of illegal bunkering of crude oil in the Niger Delta area. Illegal bunkering of crude oil has contributed so much in environmental, social, and security challenges in the Niger Delta area. This has to stop, because it has led to so many youths dropping out from school.

Objectives of the Research

The primary object is to investigate the reasons behind illegal bunkering of crude oil and the detrimental effects in the Niger Delta area, while the specific objectives include

1. To ascertain the primary reasons behind the practice of illegal bunkering of crude oil in the Niger Delta.
2. To examine the effects of illegal bunkering of crude oil on the economy of Nigerian.
3. Provide possible solutions to the issue of illegal bunkering of crude oil in Niger Delta area.

Statement of Hypothesis

The issue of smuggling crude oil in Niger Delta area cannot be easily solved permanently.

METHODOLOGY

Data's were obtained through desk review of existing literatures online on illegal bunkering of crude oil in Niger Delta, Nigeria, illegal bunkering trend, and impact of illegal bunkering of crude oil on the environment. And also, participants were engaged in an interview in three communities, they were asked to provide free information on their health, families, and the environment on how illegal bunkering has affected their communities and its environment. This research was conducted in Opuama, Igbomotoru, and Diebu Community, all in SILGA, Bayelsa State. About 90 persons (both males and females) were interviewed from each of the communities from 18 and 90 years old. About 30 persons from each of the age groups of 18 - 30, 31 - 50, and 51 - 90 years were interviewed, and their responses to effects on

illegal bunkering of crude oil on human health, and its environment were evaluated. The justification for this study is to establish a trustworthiness of the findings on the causes and effects on illegal bunkering of crude oil in Opuama, Igbomotoru, and Diebu communities.

The Study Area

The Health and Environmental Challenges in the Niger Delta Area

The Niger Delta occupies a land mark around 70,000 km² (27,000 square meter) and 7.5% of Nigeria's territory mass. Typically, it includes the present Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta States of today (Bodo and Gimah, 2020). In the year 2000, the region's Abia, Edo, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, and Imo States were included by Obasanjo's administration (Bodo and Gimah, 2020). Nearly 31 million individuals representing more than 40 diverse ethnic groups, including the Bini, Efik, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Yoruba, Oron, Ijaw, Ogba, Ikwerre, Abua/Odual, Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwuani, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni, Epie-Atissa and Obolo people, are among the occupants of the political Niger Delta, with over 250 unique vernaculars (Bodo and Gimah, 2020). The nine states that constitute the Niger Delta is shown in Figure 1, with more than 37 million residents, or 22% of Nigeria's total (National Population Commission, 2006). Over 1500 towns that serve as hosts for the oil industry (Forest and Sousa, 2006). The area is primarily made up of rural villages, but includes some important Nigerian towns such as Port Harcourt, Warri, Yenagoa, Calabar, and Akwa-Ibom. The majority of locals depend on fishing and agriculture to exist, and they typically live below the poverty level (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). The oil wealth that has made Nigeria the greatest producer of petroleum in Africa, and the sixth greatest oil producer in the globe is found in the Niger Delta area (Watts, 2004). Oil spills are frequent in the region and have been associated with infrastructure decay, refinery processing spills, pipeline corrosion, and inadequate maintenance, human error, and vandalism committed on purpose or oil theft (Amnesty International, 2009). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006), there were roughly 6800 oil spills totaling 3,000,000 bbl between 1976 and 2001. Likewise, according to reports, in the earliest part of 2008,



Figure 1: The States that made up Niger Delta Area (Udotong *et al.*, 2017).

there were 419 cases, 2007 had 588 oil spills, and 253 in (Yakubu, 2008). SPDC, 2014 reported that, between 2007 and 2013, its facilities leaked roughly 324,000 bbl of crude oil in about 1500 incidents. According to SPDC, of the overall amount of oil that spilled from SPDC installations in 2013, about 75% is due to sabotage/theft, and 15% due to operational spills resulting from corrosion, equipment failure, or human error.

Conceptual Clarifications of Bunkering

Bunkering is simply, when an authorized worker offers services on lubricants, water, or fuel, on demand to marine services. In other word, bunkering is rendering fuel supply to ship, boats, or vehicles legally (Silas, 2015). To dispel the myths that some Nigerians have, it is important to distinguish between legitimate bunkering and illegal bunkering, sometimes known as oil theft. Illegal bunkering is when a petroleum product is being syphoned illegally from either pipeline or a well head, and load it in a ship or boat to sell at a low price. There are 3 forms of illegal bunkering:

1. Theft of condensate and petroleum products intended for the neighborhood market on a moderate and small scale.
2. Hacking crude oil directly from pipelines or well head with a hose.
3. Employing fake bills of lading to lift more crude oil than is permitted. Operationally, unauthorized removal of crude oil is known as illegal oil bunkering or oil theft, e.g individuals or organized gangs stealing petroleum products (Silas, 2015).

Main Causes of Illegal Bunkering of Crude Oil in Nigeria

Bad Governance and Corruption

The unlawful nature of the Nigerian oil business has become well known (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). The state-owned oil company, Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) is broadly observed among the most politicized and traded off organizations in the oil business in the country (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). The states that produce the majority of oil are; Akwa Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers. These four states likely have Nigeria's most notable planned livelihoods per resident, which could top those of the smaller West African nations, however a significant portion of the oil wealth (about 13% of the national oil earnings) is misappropriated or transferred to distant foreign nations (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). Over 150,000 bbl of crude oil have been transported every day for the past 60 years via the wells in the various smaller terminals along the popular Trans Niger pipeline in Nigeria's Niger Delta across the creeks and underprivileged communities of Ogu-Bolo and Ogoni land to the massive oil terminal in Bonny (Albert Amaratunga and Haigh, 2019). This old pipeline is among the most frequently sabotaged in the world today and has reportedly started to corrode and has some spring leaks. Reports has shown that when some of

the contractors of these companies are repairing some of the section of the Trans Niger pipeline to remove illegal taps on the line, another group is seen to be installing pieces of equipment to siphon huge amount of oil into large barges that would take these oil to the sea to awaiting tankers that will take them to the US and Europe (Albert Amaratunga and Haigh, 2019). The Niger Delta oil theft is believed to be made possible with the collusion of the authorities and the military. Stealing of crude oil is not possible without the cover of the authorities, as Nigerian illegal bunkering of oil has been severally regarded in literature as organized crime (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013).

Poverty and Unemployment

The people who live in the Niger Delta have complained over the years of total neglect by the operating oil companies and the government, as amidst the abundant resources on their land; they have been suffering from abject poverty and want (Tombari *et al.*, 2020). These circumstances have sparked populist unrest and provided openings for intentional crime. The Niger Delta people were mainly into agricultural activities, such as cultivation of crops, rearing of Animals, and fishing (Tombari *et al.*, 2020). But, since the discovery of oil in the land, the available farmlands for cultivation of crops, the natural forest for the hunting of wild animals, and the rivers for fishing have been destroyed by numerous oil spills, gas flaring, and forest fires leading to habitat damage, desolate areas (Gimah and Bodo, 2019). In a quest to survive, syphoning or destruction of crude oil pipeline is a sustainable method of subsistence.

Marginalization and Neglect

The Niger Delta publics have alleged that the cities of Lagos and Abuja have been transformed from rural settlements to mega cities with the revenues from the Niger Delta, and yet the region where this enormous wealth is coming from, fundamental social facilities are absent (Bodo, 2019). The Niger Delta's rural communities where oil exploration takes place, the houses that most people lives, are the poorest people on earth, with no sustainable source of income due to the extensive destruction of their farmlands and rivers (Bodo and David, 2018). Currently, all oil-producing community in the Niger Delta is being policed by the Nigerian military with people's rights to free movement and survival as a human being denied (Bodo, 2019; Bodo and David, 2018).

Presumed Benefits of Illegal Bunkering Activities

According to a research conducted in Ogoni land, 2018, the petroleum products (Kerosene, petrol, and diesel) gotten from illegal bunkering of crude oil were seen as a moneymaking trade. These products are bought from the refining sites in jerry-cans in order to retail them to the local people with small bottles. The refined kerosene from the illegal crude oil refineries cost only 50 naira per small bottle, while the kerosene in the same small bottle from legal refineries are sold 200 naira, and the kerosene

from the illegal refineries last longer when compared with the kerosene from the legal refineries (Bodo, 2019). As far as the local people's concern, illegal bunkering of crude oil has provided jobs for a lot of persons in Niger Delta communities, including; women, men, and youths, and it has lessened the miseries of the public somehow. The products gotten from crude oil in illegal bunkering are commonly referred to as kpofire (Bodo, 2019).

The people believed that they make a profit up to \$93,600 (₦70,668,000) per annum, and also, when you consider the price of setting up an illegal bunkering of crude oil site, it's costs only about \$4,700 (₦3,548,500) at the rate of \$755 to a \$1 (Campbell, 2015). The cumulative loss in government revenue on installation sites, damages of oil pipelines, and crude oil thief runs into billions of dollars (Dalby, 2014). However, some previous research has shown that the awareness level of people on environmental issue within the Niger Delta area is high, regardless of the actions of some individuals, mainly militant youths (Bodo and Ukpong, 2018, and Bodo, 2018).

The Niger Delta's Illegal Oil Bunkering Operational Mechanisms

Legitimate refineries are situated in industrial areas that have been properly planned for the protection of both the environment and workers. While most illegal oil refineries are found in the cricks, forests, or villages. These criminals burst or puncture the oil pipelines that transport it from one location to another, tap it at the rupture or puncture site, and then move the crude oil to tanks or containers where they refine their goods. (Adishi, 2017). As stated by Asuni, (2009), Katsouris and Sayne, (2013); In the Niger Delta, there are four ways to engage in unlawful activity.

1. Condensate and petroleum products intended for the neighborhood market were stolen on a modest scale.

Given that it is carried out by locals who hide behind the instability in the Niger Delta, this is less serious.

2. By physical removal of the "Christmas tree," one can directly hack into pipelines or tap the oil from a wellhead with a hose. This group uses more sophisticated and technical materials for this enterprise. In exchange for money and weapons that are used to sustain the ongoing battle, the stolen goods were placed into smaller barges that were then transported directly into the ocean and loaded onto larger barges (mother ships).

3. Unauthorized lifting of more crude oil than is permitted using fraudulent bills of lading. Since it involves the use of fake bills of lading that are issued to a shipper, listing the contents of the shipment, and acknowledging receipt of goods for transport and defining terms of delivery," this category only discusses a corrupt system that is made possible by official corruption.

4. The fourth is the use of explosives like dynamite or bombs to blast the crude oil pipeline in an effort to stop the flow of oil to refineries or loading stations. Combining categories one and two with political impact, this category. Because oil installations are bombed and blasted with the intention of destroying output rather than stealing, this category is to blame for the majority of oil spills and environmental devastation.

After refinement, the crude oil is loaded into a metal pot. A burner or fire is then lit underneath the metal pot, heating the crude oil and causing it to turn into vapor. In order to condense the vapor into petroleum products like gasoline, diesel, and kerosene, it is then cooled. The liquid goods are gathered and put into containers to be sold. Diesel, which is sold to dealers, owners of gas stations, or middlemen utilizing big oceangoing vessels, is the main product from these clandestine refineries. This distillation procedure is unlawful.



Figure 2: Some Activities in Illegal Bunkering.

Three things can go wrong in the process of illegal refining (Nnaemeka *et al.*,2022);

Heat Supply at Distillation Units is Uncontrolled

Without any pressure or temperature controls, the burner continuously supplies heat to the boiler or distillation

plant. Thermal stress may result from the unit being overloaded with heat from a constant heat source. Under extreme pressure, the thermally stressed boiler can explode, discharging its highly combustible contents into the surroundings. The fire may quickly spread, posing a risk to both people's lives and property.



Figure 3: Heat is always being produced by the burner (Agency Report, 20th Jan., 2022).

Poor Design of Condensation Units

Craftspeople build the illicit refineries with little to no respect for fundamental engineering design concepts. A condensation machine should be designed to operate at a particular temperature. An illegal refinery's condensation unit is typically a water bath composed of wood or metal material, and immersed in a cement-coated iron pipe tube. It is possible that the water-cooling bath will not be able to sufficiently chill the vapor to produce the necessary liquid, and temperature and pressure would rise as a result of this. When pressure increases beyond

what the cooling tube's materials can withstand, the tubes may explode and catch fire.

At Collection Points, the Refined Product is Exposed

There is a guarantee of total condensation of the vapor product to liquid, therefore, the immediate area may receive some vapor evaporation. The gathered liquid products could potentially evaporate into the environment if they are not tightly contained because they are volatile. The mixture of the fugitive materials might immediately cause significant pollution, and worker actions like smoking and



Figure 4: The Refined products are collected into containers (Triaxadmin, 23rd Sep.2014).

metal sparks could then set the product ablaze.

Consequences of Illegal Bunkering

Illegal bunkering practices cause pollution of the air, water, and land. The burners that heat the distillation units release a significant amount of carbon black. The environment is also exposed to natural gas, primarily methane, as a result of the removal of crude oil from a pipeline. Methane gas is more effective than carbon dioxide at causing climate change and global warming.

Untreated waste from illegal refineries has an impact on the water cycle and wildlife habitats, which hinders the formation of trees. Individuals who engage in unlawful bunkering disregard all health, safety and ecological regulations, which can have detrimental effects (Princely, 2022). Figure 5 shows activities of siphoning crude oil from pipeline.

Punch reports that on March 3, 2023, there was an explosion of crude oil at the site of tapping in Rumuekpe, Rivers State, in the Emuoha Local Government Area,



Figure 5: Siphoning Crude Oil from a Pipeline (Princely, 2022).

where hundreds of persons, including men and women, were thought dead. A crude oil-transporting truck allegedly was a blazed at around two in the morning on Friday as it attempted to find an unauthorized refinery in the area. Another incident was recorded by Princely, 2022, on the 24th April, 2022, when over 100 individuals were murdered in an explosion at one of the unlicensed refineries. Another explosion occurs on the 24th October 2021, and killed about 25 persons.

With the help of contractors and a joint military force, the Federal Government has taken action to curb unlawful bunkering and has identified numerous locations where crude oil is bunkered in the Niger Delta. Some 58 illicit bunkering sites have been found since the effort to halt oil theft in the waterways of Bayelsa and Delta states began (Princely, 2022). However, the move by Federal Government to stop stealing crude oil in the nation is a welcome development.

Health Effects of Exposure to Crude Oil

Crude oil exposure causes numerous and significant health issues for children, pregnant women, and adults. Exposure occurs through inhalation, ingestion (of liquid droplets in the air), and direct skin contact. Some of the health effects will be long-term diseases and may last for a lifetime, and it can even affect the future generations (Paul, 2019). Crude oil, which is a known teratogen, can result in birth abnormalities, changes in fetal development, and decreased fetal survival. The bio-hematopoietic structure, which produces blood, is one of crude oil's primary target organs, as well as lymphatic, nervous and reproductive systems (Paul, 2019). The crude oil contains benzene, which is a recognized carcinogen. There are several health effects associated with breathing crude oil vapors, including headaches, irritation of the nose, dizziness, sleepiness, throat, fatigue, nausea, labored breathing, lungs, chemical pneumonia, as well as coordination problems. Chronic exposure can result in irregular heartbeats, convulsions, and coma (Paul, 2019).

Consequences of Illicit Bunkering on the Economy of Nigeria

Because Nigeria's economy is based on oil, price

decreases on the global market or economic sabotage, such as vandalism or bunkering, might have a detrimental effect. The Nigeria Finance Minister Dr. Ngozi Iweala, claimed around 400,000 bbl of oil per day were unlawfully bunkered and stolen under the former administration of Goodluck Jonathan. Nevertheless, one joint venture operator, SPDC, places the loss between 150,000 and 180,000 bbl per day. If one were to depend solely on government statistics, this would suggest that Nigeria and her operating partners recently lost an estimated \$40 million (about \$6 billion) every day at a fixed price of \$100 per barrel of crude oil. This equates to an expected annual amount of 2.184 trillion (Dominic, 2016).

A different viewpoint is provided by Mutiu Sunmonu, Chairmen of the SPDC's African Region, who claims that "heavily armed and well-organized terrorists attacked oil and gas facilities in the Delta, shut down operations of the firm, kidnapped workers, and sabotaged pipelines." There are barges waiting to export stolen oil to offshore tankers. Each of these has decline the amount of oil SPDC produces, environmental and social problems brought on by oil spills, and a reduction in government money that could have been utilized to build infrastructure and provide services. There were around 16,476,011 barrels of lost crude oil from 2006 to 2011 alone. Up to \$15 billion (about 2.4 trillion) in annual revenue could be at risk from the massive loss translated (Dominic, 2016).

DISCUSSION

About 90 people (both males and females) were interviewed from Opuama, Igbomotoru, and Diebu communities between the ages of 18 - 90 years old. About 30 persons each from the age groups of 18 - 30, 31 - 50, and 51 - 90 years were interviewed, and their responses to illegal bunkering of crude oil which has affected many lives and its environment negatively. The people complained that, the rise in armed gangs and the increasing rate of acquiring light and small arms in the communities from the large income realized from the business is a big threat to them. Another major negative effect is the high incidence of school dropouts in the affected communities. Most children of school age of primary and secondary pupil and students prefer to engage

in the business rather than going to school, because they want to make quick and good money. Parents too have not helped matters, as they did not openly discourage their children from joining the business because of the huge proceeds realized from it. The effect of this ugly trend on the communities could be gross in the nearest future.

The people also believed that some strange sicknesses and diseases they are experiencing are due to the activities of the illegal bunkering of crude oil e.g cancer, birth defects, diabetes, hypertension, respiratory problems, kidney diseases, headache, dizziness, sleepiness, lungs, nose, throat irritation, fatigue, nausea, labored breathing and cardiovascular diseases as well as loss of coordination, especially children and the pregnant mothers. The water, air, and land is constantly mixed with oil spills. This is not healthy for humans, fishes and other sea/river creatures. The water, land, and air is constantly mixed with crude oil spills which are not healthy for humans, fishes and other sea/river creatures. Therefore, their fishing business is being rendered useless, and their farm land has also been badly polluted, that it is no longer suitable for agriculture. The indigence also complained that illegal bunkering of crude oil also contributed to acid rain, and that the rain corroding their buildings roofs, and they do drinks from that same rain water during rainy session. They believed that most cases of respiratory problems they are facing, like asthma, bronchitis, lung disease, heart attack, miscarriage, and skin disease are on account of dinking crude oil contaminated water. Illegal bunkering has caused serious hardship and damage to human, plant and animal lives in their environment.

Alternatives to Illegitimate Bunkering in Niger Delta Area

The problem of illicit bunkering within this territory may be solved if the causes of the issues are carefully investigated. The potential remedies include:

Providing Youth with Employment Opportunities

Most young people in the Niger Delta, even recent graduates, are unemployed. An idle mind is the devil's workshop, according to one of our African proverbs. Regardless of their social class or level of education, the Nigerian government should develop programs that can engage the youths of the Niger Delta in large numbers and without any bias. The screening and selection process used in the NPOWER program, which provides temporary employment to 500,000 unemployed kids (out of the roughly 11 million unemployed youth in Nigeria), was commendable. The government may use the same approach to help the young people in the Niger Delta. The government can generate more revenue from the industry in the event that adolescents are engaged.

Construction of More Refinery Infrastructures

The federal government of Nigeria should construct new refineries in the area. You can imagine the distance

of crude oil pipelines that run from Warri to Kaduna, anything can happen for that long distance. If local refineries could be made capable of processing the crude oil where it's found, the possibility of stealing the crude oil will reduce to the barest minimum.

Keeping Surveillance

Nigeria's government ought to be fully responsible for keeping surveillance wherever crude oil pipelines are. Through meticulous surveillance and follow-up of all oil exploration operations, illegal oil bunkering may be eliminated. Every loophole can be found if the government is fully involved in all oil lifting and distribution operations.

Cooperation with the Illegal Bunkering Sponsors

One of the major reasons dealing with illegal bunkering is challenging is that high-ranking security officers, top politicians, senior government officers, and members of oil companies are involved in this atrocity. If all these people can cooperate with Nigeria's federal government and the oil companies, the issue of illegal bunkering can be solved.

Prosecution

Federal government should prosecute anybody caught in illegal bunkering, irrespective of the level of the person, they should face the full wrath of the law. Many people are still in business because nothing happen to them.

CONCLUSION

Illegal bunkering of a significant issue in Nigeria. It is capable of incapacitating the economy of Nigeria overtime, as the country is solely dependent on the revenues from petroleum for its daily expenditures. Petroleum production with exploitation over the years have caused so many environmental, socio-economic and political problems in the region. Moreover, several people have died as a result of illegal crude oil bunkering. Illegal crude oil bunkering in Opuama, Igbomatoru, and Diebu communities has caused several environmental problems to the environment such as; loss of plants, human health, and animal's lives. The oil producing companies, and government are also losing revenue. Therefore, everybody should cooperate with the federal government of Nigeria and the oil companies that are responsible for petroleum products in Nigeria in controlling it. Stealing is bad, and let it stop to enable us to make our nation Nigeria a better place for all of us.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To minimize the activities of illegally bunkering crude oil in Niger Delta region, the following suggestions are made:

1. To appease the region's residents for the long-term marginalization they have experienced, Nigeria's federal government should support socio-economic growth for Niger Delta residents.

2. To reduce crime and regional oil theft, the government should launch a comprehensive, aggressive campaign.

3. In partnership with the necessary institutions dealing with oil and gas and oil spills, the government and the oil companies should put into place comprehensive security measures, such as 24-hour monitoring devices entrusted to community security officials.

4. Provide a system for the comprehensive inclusion of oil-producing communities in security plans.

5. The inhabitants of oil-bearing communities should be included in the region's effective governance, equitable sharing of oil income, and political prioritizing of regional communities.

6. Oil tycoons should employ technology to safeguard the performance of their pipelines, and they should also create ROWs for their pipelines so that security personnel can quickly see any breaches.

7. The government at the federal level should let the legal system work against individuals who support these unlawful activities while sheltering behind the protection of the state

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