

THE DEVASTATING EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION:

A CASE STUDY OF THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA.

By
**Angela Kesiena ETUONOVBE, LSM, FHNR,
MNIS. NIGERIA**

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SYNOPSIS

▶ In Nigeria, like other developing nations, the consequent environmental problems are legion. viz;

- Pollution in all its ramifications
- Desertification due to agrarian activities and poor soil management.
- Aggravated soil erosion
- Flood disasters
- Proliferation of slums in urban areas.

The overriding effect of the above, obviously impinges on the health and socio-economic well being of the people.

ENVIRONMENT AND ITS DYNAMICS (Defined)

- ▶ Environment is defined as conditions, circumstances, etc that affects a people's lives.
(*The Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary of Current English*)
- ▶ It is also defined as the complex of physical, chemical and biotic factors that acts upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determines its form and survival.
(*Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 4*).
- ▶ From the economic point, human environment is described as natural capital which is analogous to financial capital assets. (Odiette (1993))
- ▶ Flowing from the last definition, any damage done to the environment affects capital negatively, which invariably reduces the value of its recurrent services. And this financial capital is the rudiments by which we can understand the environment analytically.

HUMAN ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ Human activities is categorized as capable of causing environmental nuisance and degradation as:
 - Destructive logging of forests
 - Overgrazing and over-cropping of arable lands
 - Strip mining etc.

This may be extended to include:

- oil exploitation
- industrialization
- improper disposal of domestic solid waste and human excretal including liquid waste.

SOME PECULIAR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE NIGER DELTA

- ▶ Pollution
 - Air
 - Water
 - Land

- ▶ Oil Pollution
 - Oil Spill
 - Gas Flaring

Air Pollution

- ▶ It is an addition of harmful substances to the atmosphere resulting in damage to the environment, human health, and quality of life.

- ▶ Examples of air pollution in the region
 - Exhaust Gases of Vehicles
 - Tobacco Smoke
 - Noise Pollution
 - Acid Rain

Water Pollution

- ▶ Water pollution is the introduction into fresh or ocean waters of chemical, physical, or biological material that degrades the quality of the water and affects the organisms living in it.

Examples of Water Pollution

- ▶ **Industrial Effluent**
Water is discharged having been used in production processes. This waste water may contain acids, alkalis, salts, poisons, oils and in some cases harmful bacteria.
- ▶ **Sewage Disposal and Domestic Wastes**
Sewage as well as domestic and farm wastes are often allowed to drain into rivers and dams. The effects cannot be over emphasised.

Land Pollution

- ▶ Land pollution is the degradation of the Earth's land surface through misuse of the soil by poor agricultural practices, mineral exploitation, industrial waste dumping, and indiscriminate disposal of urban wastes.
- ▶ Over use of land for the above activities can adversely affects land.
- ▶ The accumulation of waste threatens the health of people in residential areas.
- ▶ Waste decays, encourages household pests and turns urban areas into unsightly, dirty and unhealthy places to live in.



Photo 1

Waste dump in residential area

Oil Pollution

▶ OIL SPILL

The vast majority of Nigeria's oil and gas is produced in the region. While this generates billions of dollars for the Nigerian economy, it causes major environmental problems for the inhabitants and the ecosystem.

- ▶ These spillages are a regular feature in the Delta. They are rarely dealt with promptly. In some cases, minor leakages are left for months, resulting into major pollution.
- ▶ Leaking pipelines, running through villages, farms, creeks and rivers in the region, are a major source of pollution, sickness and economic disasters for the people.



Photo 2

A major oil pipeline in the region

Photo 3, An oil spill that occurred in the region



Gas Flaring

- ▶ More gas is flared in Nigeria than anywhere else in the World.
- ▶ The smoke released is damaging to the people who are resident within.

This affects their livelihood and as such exposed them to an increasing risk of

- premature delivery
- premature death,
- child respiratory illnesses
- asthma,
- cancer and a host of others.

- ▶ The flaring produces acid rain in the region, which are inimical to both flora and fauna.
- ▶ The smoke is also a major contributor to greenhouse gases.

Photo 4. A gas flare site in the region



CONCLUSION

- ▶ From the foregoing it should be noted that Nigeria is at a disadvantage both financially and in manpower resources if it allows this dismal practice to continue in the region. Therefore all hands will be on deck to ensure that the revitalization process presently going on is not a fluke.
- ▶ In order to ensure a turn around and more, for a healthy living, effort must be geared to reduce the massive pollution of the biosphere.

RECOMMENDATION

The onus is on the Federal Government to ensure that active legislations are put in place and implementation are not handled with kid's glove. The following measures could be adopted:

- ▶ Enforce the establishment of environmental protection agency boards at both the state and local government levels in the region.
- ▶ Carry out anti-litter campaigns to educate the people on proper waste management.
- ▶ Ensure that organic waste are dumped in designated places removed from residential areas.
- ▶ Establish smokeless zones which is virtually novel in the polity.
- ▶ Inorganic materials such as metals, glass, plastic, as well as paper, can be reclaimed and recycled. This in no small way will enhance our economy as it will provide source of employment for the teeming unemployed masses.

Thank You For Listening