

ABSTRACT

Towards Environmental Sustainability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Theological Framework for Broader Involvement of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

The Niger Delta environmental crisis fuelled principally by the degradation from oil and gas exploration activities has had negative impact on the sustainability of the region into the long-term future. The fallout of the frequent confrontations between the government and oil companies on one hand and the communities (supported by the so-called Niger Delta militants) on the other has had adverse consequences on the wellbeing of the people and the environment.

Tracing the issues that posed threats to the sustainability of the Niger Delta environment led to the discovery of a complex mix of bio-physical, economic, and socio-political factors. These factors have compounded the state of degradation. In this thesis, the response of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) to these problems was brought under scrutiny in the light of the failure of key stakeholders, namely, the government, the oil companies and the local communities, to resolve the issues.

The results from the fieldwork show that the PCN is not engaging with these issues in a rigorous and systematic manner. The thesis unravels factors militating against the PCN's participation, and reveals opportunities open to the church. However, what is lacking is a conscious effort by the PCN to pull together a local ecological theology of creation from its inherited theology and from local wisdom. A framework for such a local holistic ecotheology (LHE) is therefore suggested to drive PCN's involvement, and potentially step into the void left by the earlier-mentioned stakeholders.

The LHE is designed to be practical and contextual, having its starting point in the local socio-cultural, economic, political, and ecclesiastical context. It draws from elements of local cultures and tradition, the lived experiences of the people at the grassroots, and from Christian theology. It is proposed as a holistic framework that factors in the challenges facing the people and the environment, and proffers practical suggestions towards resolving the problems.

Towards Environmental Sustainability in the
Niger Delta Region of Nigeria:
A Theological Framework for Broader Involvement of
the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

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DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date 1 August 2017

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

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DEDICATION

To Almighty God, for His guidance and inspiration;

to my wife Nnenna – my friend and companion for life – for her encouragement;

and to Rock, David and Sharon for supporting Daddy in this long quest.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAEC	Association of African Earthkeeping Churches
AG, AoG	Assemblies of God
AI	Amnesty International
AIC	African Instituted [Initiated] Churches
AGO	Automotive Gas Oil
ATK	Aviation Turbine Kerosene
AZTREC	Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists
BBC	British Broadcasting Service
bcf/d	billion cubic feet, per day
BFO	Board of Faith and Order
BPT	Board of Personnel and Training
BT	Bible Teaching
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CBCN	Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CC	Carrying Capacity
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CMS	Church Missionary [Mission] Society
COP	Conference of Parties
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSM	Church of Scotland Mission
CSN	Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPK	Dual purpose kerosene
DPR	Department of Petroleum Resources
ECCR	Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECWA	Evangelical Church of West Africa
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EGASPIN	Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria
ERA	Environmental Rights Action
ES	Environmental Sustainability
FEPA	Federal Environmental Protection Agency
FOC	Foreign Oil Company
FoEN	Friends of the Earth Nigeria
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GRA	Government Reservation Area
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HYPREP	Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
INC	Ijaw National Congress
IPCC	Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
IYC	Ijaw Youth Congress

JRC	Joint Revolutionary Council
JTF	Joint Task Force
LGA	Local Government Area
LHE	Local Holistic Ecotheology
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MAMSER	Mass Mobilization for Self-reliance, Social Justice & Economic Recovery
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MCA	Men’s Christian Association
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
n.d.	Not dated (of published document without a publication date)
NDA	Niger Delta Avengers
NDDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDES	Niger Delta Environmental Surveys
NDPVF	Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force
NDVS	Niger Delta Vigilante Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NEP	New Environmental Paradigm
NEITI	Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
NIMASA	Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency
NNOC	Nigerian National Oil Corporation
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NOSDRA	National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency
NT	New Testament
NUPENG	National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers
OAIC	Organisation of African Instituted Churches
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OT	Old Testament
PA	Preventive Action
PCS&D	Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PC Nigeria)
PCN	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church USA
PENGASSAN	Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria
PFN	Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
PPP	Polluter Pays Principle
PP	Precautionary Principle
PMS	Premium motor spirit
P&P	Practice and Procedure
PPMC	Pipeline Products Marketing Company
PWS&D	Presbyterian World Services and Development (PC Canada)
PYPAN	Presbyterian Young People’s Association of Nigeria
SCIN	Shell Companies in Nigeria
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SI	Sustainability Indicators
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London)
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
TEKAN	<i>Tarayar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeria</i>
TI	Transparency International
TM	Theology and Mission
TROMPCON	Traditional Rulers of Oil Minerals Producing Communities of Nigeria
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
USAID	US Agency for International Development
Vs	Versus
WAI	War Against Indiscipline
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WG	Women's Guild
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZIRRCON	Zimbabwe Institute for Religious Research an Ecological Conservation

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Pollution: Section 41 of the FEPA Act Cap. F10, Laws of the Federation 2002, defines pollution as any *'man-made or man aided alterations of chemical, physical or biological quality of the environment to the extent that is detrimental to that environment or beyond acceptable limits.'* Environmental pollution is 'the unfavourable alteration of our surroundings, through direct or indirect effect of changes in energy pattern, radiation levels, chemical and physical concentration and abundance of organisms. Environmental pollution is the gradual introduction of harmful materials or substances into the environment which consequently occasion untoward effects on living and non-living things' (Zudonu, 2015:130).

Biosphere: This is a description for the earth's surface and its atmosphere within which organism live.

Ecology: As a discipline ecology is the study of organisms in their environment and how they interact with one another (Cho, 2010:13). Ecology is derived from the Greek word *oiko* which has to do with the 'house', or 'family'. Generally put, it is 'the doctrine of the house'. By this is meant the household of creation (Moltmann, 1985:xii). It is basically the interaction or relationship that exists between families of different species, among themselves, and with their external environment (the house).

Ecosphere: the aspect of the planet which supports life.

Ecosystem: It is 'an interacting system of plants, animals and micro-organisms together with their physical environment' (Osborne, 1990:12)

Environment: This is used the same as nature in this research to mean one's surrounding; the sum total of external space with/within which a person, organism, or object interacts.

Gaia: James Lovelock has interpreted the earth's systems in biological organic terms as an interdependent relationship known as Gaia. He suggests that the earth and all its systems constitute one huge living organism (Lovelock, 1979). Lovelock describes Gaia 'not as a mechanism but as a finely balanced relational nexus of life forms' (Northcott, 2007:69). Although Christians do not see God's creation as one huge living being yet in this thesis we will argue for an ecological doctrine that emphasises community and interdependence of creation's different elements (living and non-living).

Hydrocarbon: Is a compound of hydrogen and carbon, which is the main constituent of oil and natural gas.

Of The Environment, Ecology, God's Creation, and Nature: Often in this thesis the words nature, creation, environment and ecology will be used interchangeably. All terms are a description of what this research commonly calls God's creation. The same works of God, which proceed from Him, but are apart from Himself. Human beings are treated here, both as a part of God's creation, and yet distinguished from it, because of the special status of been created in God's image and likeness with responsibility for the rest of creation. Humanity interacts with its environment, and the two depend symbiotically on each other (Moltmann, 1985:3).

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

This thesis investigates the response of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) to the challenge of sustainability in the Niger Delta region in the face of massive degradation emanating principally from decades of oil and gas exploration. The key question to be answered is, how has the PCN responded to the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta? Knowing that members of the church like many ordinary residents in the area lived through the dark days of the environmental crises in the 1990s and early 2000s makes it a compelling reason to examine how they and the church responded to the issues.

Deeper still is the need to answer the question about the theological and theoretical basis for such intervention. Are there theoretical justifications for such interventions? What should these interventions be? Furthermore, what potentials exist for such active participation? The research also seeks to determine if there are existing frameworks that could serve as scaffolds for PCN's involvement. What limitations will the church likely encounter in seeking to make a difference, and how can those obstacles be surmounted?

After many years of popular protest against the degradation, neglect, and perceived injustices against the Niger Delta and its people, the region seems to now be receiving the attention it deserves, locally and internationally. At the height of the hydra-headed crisis an armed conflict ensued between the so-called Niger Delta militants on one side, and the government (and oil companies) on the other side. The confrontation led to the loss of many lives and property while drastically affecting Nigeria's economic

security and global oil supplies (Ukiwo, 2011:17-18). Above all, it had severe negative consequences on the wellbeing of the same people and environment that all the parties were purportedly concerned about.

In this scenario of degradation, the call for the sustainability of the environment from various voices (locally and internationally) became all too loud. The Niger Delta environment became the subject of several academic and non-academic discourses. But despite the volumes written not much is known about the involvement of Christian churches, especially of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN), towards addressing these problems. Given its history as a strong force for social transformation and the defence of human dignity, since its earliest Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) days (as further discussed in section 1.4), it is curious that the church seems silent in this respect. From the foregoing, the case is made for why and how the PCN can participate effectively in the promotion of sustainability within the framework of a Stewardship-focused ecotheology, which is the over-arching theme of this thesis.

1.2 Contextual Background in History and Contemporary Scholarship

This chapter provides a contextual background to understand the core issues that have created the state of unsustainability in the Niger Delta, and makes a case for the intervention of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. There are serious crises bedevilling the area, particularly the degradation and neglect of the environment associated mainly with oil and gas exploration. Added to this is the growing impact of climate change, socio-economic privation, and bad governance. The built-up anxiety and frustration following unheeded calls for environmental remediation, and also the question of revenue allocation (Ekhaton, 2016:11), do regularly erupt in violent demonstrations. A situation that has led to an intractable armed resistance despite a

so-called amnesty program (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012; Obi & Rustad, 2011:204-207). This armed resistance by an assemblage of local militias is just one of the signs of weak governance. The other key issue is related to the government's failure to discharge its responsibility in the four critical areas of security, basic human needs, reliable political institutions, and a sustainable environment for the economy to flourish (Ahonsi, 2011:34-35). It is debatable whether anywhere else typifies the upheavals and uncertainties in Nigeria like the Niger Delta region.¹ Nevertheless, since Nigeria's independence from British rule in 1960 its very existence has been tested severally, not the least, by the three years of civil war (1967-70). Chinua Achebe (1983) famously wrote that in the eyes of many Nigerians the country was 'a mere geographical expression', a notion he attributes to 'not only the British who had an interest in keeping it so', but also the so-called nationalists who exploited tribal solidarity to checkmate 'their more successful rivals from other parts of the country' (Achebe, 1983:25). Nigeria has been described by a journalist as 'a country that its people did not desire or design' (Peel, 2011:41).

The mixture of the foregoing socio-political and economic upheavals with the Niger Delta environmental problem created immense complications that have continued to affect the peace, security, and progress of the country, as Iwebunor Okwechime (2013:8) attests. The government and other bodies, including the operating oil companies, have employed various approaches, including the use of force, to resolve this same crisis that has led to the loss of many lives and property in the region.

The United Nations and other multilateral bodies have as well intervened in different ways to try to negotiate a solution to the multifaceted crisis. An intervention of pivotal

1

importance was a study conducted by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) in 2011 which provided a scientific basis for assessing the state of the Niger Delta environment. It focused on oil degradation in Ogoniland, with particular interest in the operation of Shell, the major operator in the area. The report that followed concluded that the Niger Delta has been heavily polluted by decades of oil-related pollution and neglect. It condemned the lack of consideration and non-adherence to required industry standards in managing cases of pollution. Many countries including the United States of America expressed concern over happenings in the so-called 'New Gulf' which they viewed as being of strategic importance to their interests. For that reason the US took particular interest in the way things unfolded in that region (Cesarz, Morrison, and Cooke, 2003:1).

It will be misleading to believe that the crisis in the Niger Delta has strictly been about the environment and agitations for a better life for the people. This is due to a sinister dimension driven by some elements of the armed militias. They incorporated armed banditry, the kidnap of oil workers and ordinary citizens for ransom, raising questions about the ideology behind the movement. Were they rebels with a cause, or simply a band of opportunists and extortionists who were content to fill their own pockets? Kenneth Omeje's analysis would help here:

To put the record straight, ethnic militarism and petro-violence in the Niger Delta are not entirely about anti-oil protest for environmental degradation and so forth as most civil society groups, the media and academic commentators have often reported. Rentier accumulation through desperate and opportunistic mechanisms is indeed a major feature. Although most of the original activists that pioneered the contemporary phase of radical anti-oil protest seemed motivated by genuine concerns, the process has since acquired a logic and momentum of its own with large sections of the protagonist hustling and jostling for rentier dividends on high stakes (Omeje, 2006:59)

Could this explain the mushrooming of so-called Niger Delta vociferous activist organisations, especially the armed ones? Prominent among them was the umbrella Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), led by the enigmatic Gbomo Jomo. There was also

the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) of Alhaji Dokubo Asari, Niger Delta who at one time was likened to Nigeria's 'Robin Hood' (Peel, 2011:3).² Lately, since early 2016, a new group known as Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) has sprang up.

It is needful at this juncture to explore the question of what constitutes the Niger Delta, as this has been the subject of debate. Is the Niger Delta a given geographical area, or is it an economic zone, or a socio-political entity with a defined cultural identity?

1.2.1 Niger Delta's Peoples

Okonta and Douglas (2001:17) have described the Niger Delta as peopled by a motley array of ethnic groups, comprising 'the Ijo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Efik, Etche, Ibibio, Igbo, Andoni, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Edo, and Kwale-Igbo. Some of the ethnic groups are further subdivided into clans with their own distinctive language'. The area, as can be seen from the list, is mostly an assemblage of colourful minority tribes with competing interests (Burns 1978:155, Ukeje 2007:42). If Nigeria is culturally an agglomeration of complex ethnic groups, then the Niger Delta is a microcosm of that complexity. Although rich in culture and natural beauty, yet the region is a volatile landscape due to much pollution, corruption, neglect, poverty, and attendant anger (Ibaba, 2011:75).

1.2.2 The Niger Delta Geography

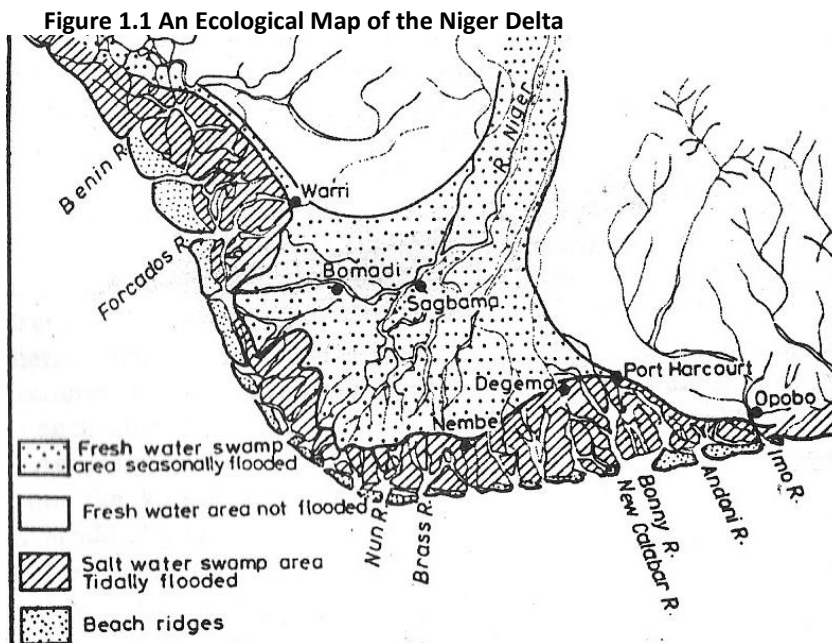
A cartographic definition of the Niger Delta advanced by the Niger Delta Environmental Surveys (NDES)

...locates the delta's northern limit at Aboh just north of the point of the first bifurcation of the Niger River into its two main distributaries, the Nun and Forcados Rivers. The

² There was also the Niger Delta Volunteers (NDV) led by Ateke Tom, including other amorphous groups such as the KKK, Degbam Boys, Icelanders, and Egbesu Boys. From the mid 2000s the Federal Government of Nigeria under President Yar'Adua (and subsequently President Goodluck Jonathan) declared a general amnesty that culminating in the demobilisation of the groups. But the continuation of some forms of the insurgency only shows that there is still a long way left for the achievement of peace.

delta's western and eastern limits are located at the estuaries of the Benin and Imo Rivers (NDES, 2004:vii).

The above description is graphically presented in the following map, courtesy of Alagoa 2005:8:



The region consists of a rich ecological zone with vast network of swamps, rivers and creeks, presenting a high biologically diverse wetland. The Niger Delta is reputed to cover an area of about 70,000 km², making it the largest river delta in Africa and the third largest in the world. 'From a coastal belt of swamps, stretching northwards the land becomes a continuous rainforest which gradually merges with woodland and Savannah grasslands in central Nigeria. The swamp, forest and woodland areas occupy about 12 per cent of the delta's land surface' (UNEP, 2010:20).

The Niger Delta has further been described as a massive flood plain in south-eastern Nigeria containing sedimentary deposits flowing down from the Niger and the Benue rivers (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:17, 83). The area, which is synonymous with the country's oil and gas economy, produces virtually all of Nigeria's oil and earns over ninety percent of its foreign exchange (Muritala, 2012:118; Babatunde, Norafidah, &

Tapiwa, 2016:1)). However, there has been a steady loss of its natural landscape and biodiversity due largely to pollution from oil exploration leading to the issues necessitating this research.³

1.2.3 The Niger Delta's Political Economy

The people of the Niger Delta have historically engaged in agriculture (fishing and farming), salt production, and trading with their neighbours especially after the sixteenth century (Alagoa, 2005:13-14). They were politically highly organised in city-states constituted under key families (canoe houses), which included their slaves (Alagoa, 2004:151; Ukiwo, 2007:41). A Portuguese, Captain Pereira, who visited Bonny at the early part of the sixteenth century described it as a 'very large village of some 2000 inhabitants' (Alagoa, 2005:154). In terms of trade, it is thought that back in the fifteenth century 'the people were already trading in large canoes capable of taking up to eighty men to markets up to a hundred leagues and more' (Alagoa, 2005:154). The above narrative gives an idea of the organised nature of community life, commerce, transportation, and indeed the level of technology operating in the Niger Delta at that time.

Contact with Europeans added a new dimension to the economic and cultural transformation of the Niger Delta. The system of trade by barter that pre-dated the arrival of Europeans continued for a while until early forms of money were introduced

³ The NDDC describes its area of operation (the Niger Delta) as: 'situated in the southern part of Nigeria and bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the East by Cameroon, occupies a surface area of about 112,110 square kilometres. It represents about 12% of Nigeria's total surface area and it is estimated that by the beginning of 2006 its population will be over 28 million inhabitants' (NDDC, 2006:49).

The commission describes itself as been established to facilitate 'the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful'. The NDDC maintains offices in the capital of the nine oil-producing states, in addition to its headquarters in Port Harcourt and a liaison office in Abuja – the nation's capital. Source: <http://www.nddc.gov.ng/about%20us.html>. Accessed 29/12/2014

(Alagoa, 2005:155; Falola, 2002:156). Africans exchanged their local produce (salt, food crops and livestock – goat, sheep, etc) for ‘large quantities of iron, brass and copper goods, cheap textiles, silver, foodstuff and salt’ from Europe (Ogot, 1999:3). Elizabeth Isichei (1997:376) adds, ‘firearms, and items such as spirits, tobacco and luxury clothes’ to the list.

The arbitrariness of the exchange mechanism favoured the European interest (Davidson, 1980:216; Falola, 2002:155; Falola & Heaton, 2008:98-104; Isichei, 1997:378). A good example was that somehow the British merchants ‘had managed to convince Africans that articles of clothing such as old soldiers’ jackets and cocked hats bought at little costs at Monmouth Street [in London], were a fair exchange for their raw materials’ (Dike, 1978:112). With the passage of time, and by a combination of many factors including intertribal wars, human slaves became a part of the merchandise. Thus, it seemed normal to record slaves alongside other commodities as part of normal business transaction. One list was said to include “large quantities of yams”, and “many slaves, cows, goats and sheep” (Alagoa, 2005:155). But legitimate trade in palm oil replaced the slave trade after its abolition. By the middle of the 19th century the Niger Delta was producing more than half of Africa’s total palm oil production (Dike, 1956:101). This earned the area its nickname the *oil rivers*, as volumes of the products were shipped through the Niger River, its tributaries and the swamps of the delta.

Since the discovery of petroleum in the twentieth century, the Niger Delta economy has revolved around crude oil and gas products. Its economy has poignantly been described as a ‘conflict economy...comprising an intensive and violent struggle for resource opportunities, inter and intra communal/ethnic conflicts over resources and

the theft and trading in refined and crude oil, which has blossomed since the 1990s' (Ikelegbe, 2005:208). However, an examination of the area's contemporary history appears to yield a narrative that is not totally different from what obtained two or three centuries previously. And as will be discussed in chapters three and four, the actors have obviously changed over the centuries, but the tactics and the entrenched interests and their modus operandi are not dissimilar.

1.2.4 Summing it up

The debate about who and what constitutes the Niger Delta (ND) is fundamental in Nigeria's resource politics, is vital in determining the quota for sharing the so-called national wealth to the constituent parts of the nation (Omeje, 2006:36). Economically, up till 2016, the recognised Niger Delta states, from oil-production perspectives, were Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ondo, Imo and Abia States. But Ejibunu (2014:7) argues against the inclusion of Igbo-speaking states such as Abia and Imo in the core Niger Delta despite their being oil-producing states. The same Ejibunu includes Edo state, which by far is on the fringes, on the basis of its cultural affinity with the other non-Igbo tribes. Ejibunu's arbitrariness becomes apparent when he lists Ondo State as a part of the Niger Delta despite that it is a Yoruba dominated State and far more removed from the Niger Delta geography. His argument is based once again on cultural affinity, because of the presence of the minority Arogbo Ijaw population in Ondo State (Ejibunu, 2014:7).

Taking away three of the nine Niger Delta states that belong to the majority tribes – Ondo (Yoruba) and Abia and Imo (Igbo) – would leave six states that are often referred to as the 'core Niger Delta'. These six states comprise a plethora of Southern minority ethnic groups which are sandwiched between the majority tribes of Yoruba in the

South-west and the Igbo in the South-east of Nigeria. The largest of these minority tribes is the Ijaw (Izon) who control the entire Bayelsa State and have significant presence in Rivers, Delta, and Edo states; and a minority presence in the Yoruba-dominated Ondo State. These six have earned the 'core' epithet due to their being at the heart of the Niger Delta insurgency with close cultural, historical and political affinities. Minus the one Yoruba (Ondo) and two Igbo (Abia and Imo) States, the political configuration remaining of the Niger Delta, namely Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River states, is known in Nigeria's present geo-political configuration as the South-South geopolitical zone.⁴

The preceding debates are emblematic of a struggle for identity and the control of resources found in the area. Ethnic solidarity has wielded ND tribes and states into a political pressure bloc to negotiate and protect their interests (Ibaba, 2011:75). However, such solidarity scarcely belies the fact that Niger Delta ethnic communities are ordinarily distinct, and sometimes disagreeing, neighbours with competing interests (Burns 1978:155, Ukeje 2007:42). Solidarity has arisen principally as a means of self-preservation, following lessons from history, as their bickering ancestors were easily overrun by European colonisers who devised the 'divide and rule' tactics (Burns, 1978:141, 144; Ukiwo, 2007:42).

The foregoing debate buttresses the idea that what constitutes the Niger Delta remains controversial. But like Okwechime (2013:7) this research has adopted a UNDP

⁴ Although the notion of geo-political zones has gained currency in Nigeria's political lexicon, it is, however, not back by any constitutional provision. But for political exigency the country has been informally carved into six geo-political zones, namely, the South-south (Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River states); South East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states); South West (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo states); North Central (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau); North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe); and North West (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto).

definition that combines ecological, cartographic, and oil-mineral production considerations, to include:

...all the oil-producing areas and others considered relevant for reasons of administrative convenience, political expedience and developmental objectives (UNDP, 2006:19)

These have been identified by the NDDC in Table 1.1 as the nine contiguous oil-producing states earlier listed, from west to east, namely: Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Abia, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States (See also Fig. 1.2). Based on various United Nations categorisations, especially the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership (UNIPP), the ethnic groups that comprise the Niger Delta qualify as indigenous people (Ako & Oladuro, 2014; Ako, 2015:9). Thus, the terms indigenes and indogenous are used in this research to describe people and natural items that originate from this region.

Figure 1.2: Political Map of the Niger Delta [Courtesy Niger Delta Regional Master Plan, Chapter 1, page 51. Available at <http://www.nddc.gov.ng/masterplan.html>]



It is noteworthy that although Anambra and Lagos States are now oil-producing states, they do not fit into the earlier geographical, economic and socio-political criteria outlined in the above sections. Despite that Anambra is bounded to the west by the Niger River, it is far removed from the heart of the delta region. And Lagos is even further away to the west.

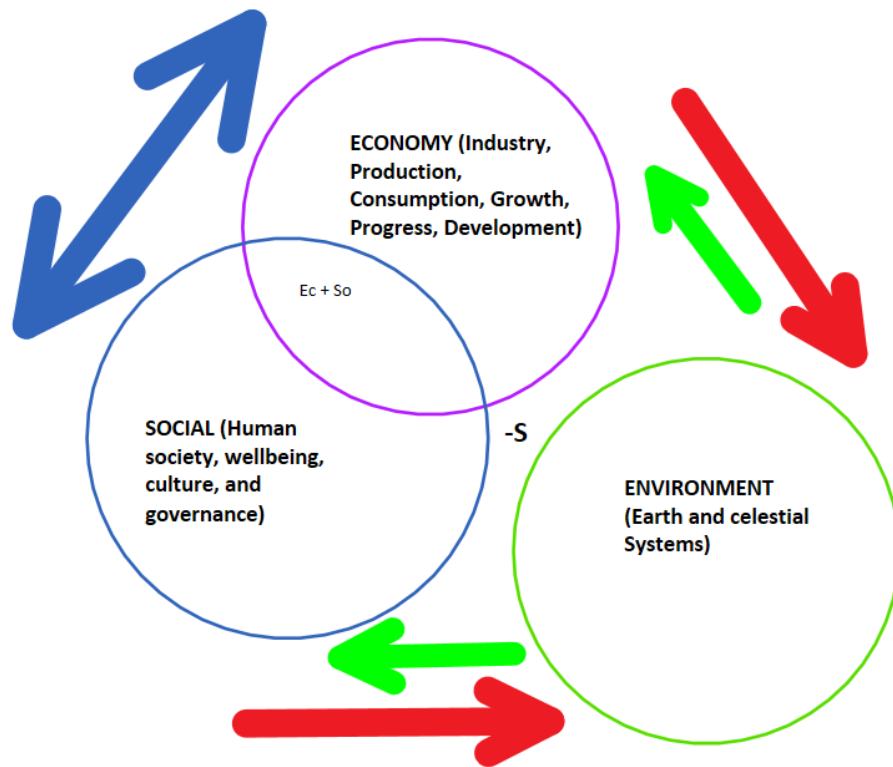
1.3 Understanding Sustainability

The idea of sustainability has developed over time and gradually gained currency. The eighteenth century Western industrial revolution led to largescale mechanisation of agricultural and production. It also increased the largescale exploitation of natural resources to meet demands. Then two world wars in the twentieth century with devastating impact instigated massive reconstruction efforts. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, commonly known as the World Bank) established in 1944 was a strategic product of that development effort.⁵ However, the push for economic growth to power it created its own social, cultural and economic pressures, and also raised concerns for the wellbeing of people and the environment (Spencer & White, 2007:49).

Fig. 1.3 graphically summarises the situation described above. The blue arrows shows how human social and political institutions (So), in strong league with the economic (Ec) forces, have plundered the environment (red arrows), in order to drive societal progress. They each have drawn heavily on the environment (Ev) in order for human society to thrive. And for all the wealth drawn from the environment (in green arrows), humanity and its economic systems (So+Ec) have left trails of unsustainability (-S). The world has experienced carbon footprints that continue to grow except humanity does something urgent. Thus, the quest for sustainability.

Figure 1.0-3: A State of Unsustainability

⁵ Over time the World Bank's work has gone beyond reconstruction to supporting and promoting sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. See: <http://worldbank.org/en/about/history>. Accessed 22/07/2016



With increasing awareness by the 1970s and 1980s that development and progress, in the face of rapid resource depletion could not be sustained endlessly, the concept of development began to be questioned. This gave rise to the idea of a limit or cap to the rapid growth being experienced, prompting fears that the world was ‘overshooting’ safe limits for continuance into the long-term future, especially (Meadows *et al*, 2004:1). Sustainable development seemed the preferred option to mitigate the damage, with the notion that it will ensure that human needs were met without necessarily mortgaging the future.⁶

Notable among efforts in this direction was the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which acknowledged strongly the conflict between the

⁶ See Robert W. Kates, Thomas M. Parris and Anthony A. Leiserowitz (2005) who have drawn up a brief historical contour of Sustainable Development (SD) to cover watershed moments.

environment and development. This tension was picked up by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its World Conservation Strategy, which 'argued for conservation as a means to assist development and specifically for the sustainable development and utilization of species, ecosystems, and resources' (Kates, Parris and Leiserowitz, 2005:10). By 1982 the sustainability movement had gained sufficient attention of the United Nations leading to the 1982 General Assembly initiating the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission (as it became known) released its report, *Our Common Future*, acknowledging that:

The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs...the "environment" is where we live; and "development" is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable (WCED, 1987: xi).

These efforts were reinforced by the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, also known as the Earth Summit. The highpoint of the conference being the declaration of principles which highlighted among other issues concerns for the impact of the changing global climate on livelihoods, biodiversity loss, and the status of forests. Its greatest success was arguably the initiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to limit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This triggered an annual conference of parties (COP) since 1995 to assess progress made on curbing climate change.⁷ The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in

⁷ Among the notable COP outcomes is the Kyoto Protocol signed in Kyoto, Japan in 1997, placing legally binding obligations on developed countries to limit their GHG emissions. The Cancun COP of 2010 built on that to limit of 2°C to global warming (GW). The latest of these conferences was the COP of

Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, strengthened commitments to Sustainable Development.⁸ The latest milestone being the 2015 COP21 in Paris which strengthened the climate change convention to limit global temperature to 2°C.

1.3.1 Defining sustainability

There are as many definitions of sustainability as there are perspectives to it.⁹ But the most widely accepted definition of it is linked to sustainable development (SD). It was given by the United Nations World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, as the ability to 'meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' (WCED, 1987:8). They also advocated setting limits, however, 'not absolute limits, but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organisations on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities' (WCED, 1987:8). Drawing further from this Ferraz & Munslow (1999:15-16) outlined seven criteria for determining sustainable development. These are namely that: there should be growth that improves the quality of people's lives; that this growth should be environmentally sensitive; and that this growth should meet people's basic needs. Furthermore, there should be a sustainable level of population; conserving and enhancing the natural resource base; and the development of adequate technology to remediate problems that arise. The seventh criterion concerns the management of natural resources in a way to meet present and future needs of humankind.

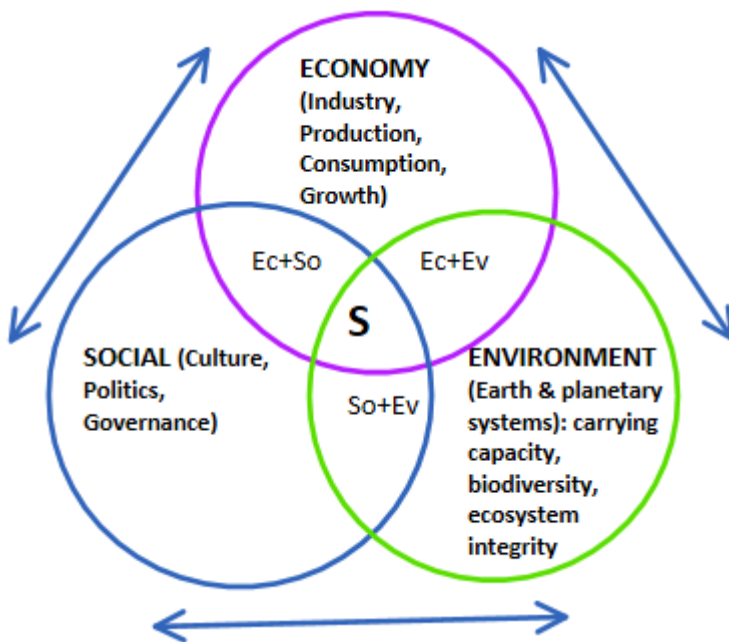
December 2015 in France leading to the Paris Agreement signed by a record one hundred and seventy nine countries.

⁸ It was nicknamed Earth Summit 2, or Rio+10 with reference to the first summit held a decade previously in Rio de Janeiro.

⁹ The lack of a universal definition rather than being a problem has been accepted as being good, ostensibly because 'people differ in the environmental, social and economic conditions within which they have to live, and having a single definition that one attempts to apply across this diversity could be both impractical and dangerous' (Bell and Morse, 1999: 10).

'Sustainable Development is classically portrayed as the interface between environmental, economic and social sustainability' (Bell and Morse 2003:3). This is depicted in the following model:

Figure 0-4: The Key Components of Sustainability



Evidently the above model (Fig. 1.4) deals with development that takes the three basic elements of the economy, Society's wellbeing, and the environment in the face of finite resources. At the heart of sustainable development is ensuring the maintenance of this critical balance (Basiago, 1999:146).

Most definitions like the WCED's have in common the consideration for the future, and allude to intra- and inter-generational equity. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also strongly argues for consideration to be given to present and future generations. However, they caution that, there will be 'something distinctly odd if we were deeply concerned for the well-being of future - as yet unborn - generations while ignoring the plight of the poor today. The ethic of universalism clearly demands

both intra-generational equity and intergenerational equity' (UNDP, 1994:13). The latter dimension has been captured by Simon Bell and Stephen Morse (1999:9) in everyday language to mean, 'not cheating on your kids'. Shedding more light elsewhere Bell and Morse (2003:3) explain the underlying philosophy to be that:

What is done now to improve the quality of life of people should not degrade the environment (in its widest bio-physical and socio-economic sense) and resources so that future generations are put at a disadvantage. In other words, we (the present) should not cheat the future; improving our lives now should not be at the price of degrading the quality of life of future generations.

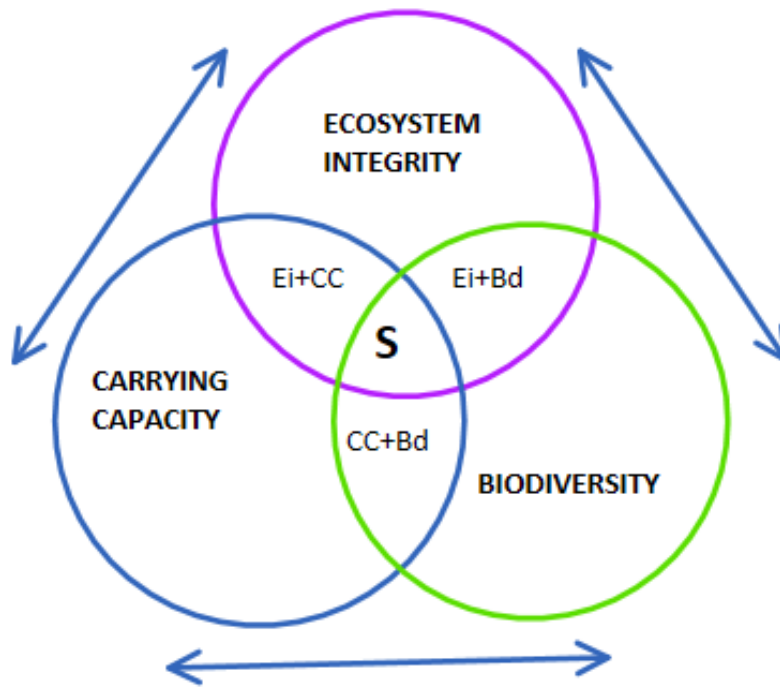
But giving consideration to humankind alone has raised the criticism of being self-centred and self-serving, known as anthropocentrism. Broadening the notion of fairness therefore means consideration for other species with whom human beings share this common space. The core of a wider considerations is therefore anchored on the foundation of justice for all. In other words, inter- and intra-generational justice as well as inter-species justice (humans and the rest of creation).

The known definitions of sustainability are loaded with the idea of keeping, maintaining, protecting and preserving something, with the particular intention of continuance into the future. The idea of something being sustainable is basically that it is 'capable of being maintained at a steady level without exhausting natural resources or causing severe ecological damage'. Michael A. Toman (1992:3) writes that, for ecologists sustainability 'connotes preservation of the status and function of the ecological systems', whilst for economists it is 'the maintenance and improvement of human living standards'. Sustainability is 'the goal to which we aspire', and should set the 'biophysical parameters' within which we live (Spencer and White, 2006:50). In other words both production and consumption should be within bearable limits of earth's resources.

This brings us to the specific concept of Environmental Sustainability (ES), often been used interchangeably with sustainable development. This is not the least because of the thin line demarcating both concepts. This thin line is based on the fact that they are both concerned with continuance into the long-term future. However, it should be understood that ES is a component of SD, while SD has a wider focus that embraces the environment, the economy, and a healthy human society in all its ramifications (including good governance, health, education, jobs, security, and so on). Nick Spencer and Robert White (2007:103) argue from a biblical standpoint that 'social and environmental sustainability are closely linked', and so highlight the moral and ethical imperatives to sustainability. Environmental sustainability is about 'limiting human impact on the biosphere to within carrying capacity; maintaining the stock of biological wealth; and using non-renewable resources at rates which do not exceed the creation of renewable substitute' (Farraz & Munslow, 1999:16-17).

Consequently environmental sustainability involves three cardinal indicators, 'ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity and biodiversity' (Basiago, 1999:150).

Figure 1.0-5: The Three Key Indicators of Environmental Sustainability



Carrying Capacity (CC) 'is the notion that an ecological system (ecosystem) can only sustain a certain density (the carrying capacity) of individuals because each individual utilizes resources in that system' (Bell and Morse, 1999:6). Exceeding the CC of an ecosystem, often due to rapid population increase and decimation of resources, places undue pressure on it and can lead to an imbalance or even an eventual collapse (J Diamond, 2006). The loss of biodiversity means the extinction of certain species of nature and the disruption of the food chain, negatively impacting on the carrying capacity as well. Thus, whenever any of those three elements (ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity and biodiversity) is at risk then sustainability of whatever kind – economic, social, and environmental – will be in jeopardy.

For Uzzell *et al* (2002:27) 'A sustainable environment involves the protection of natural wealth, the controlled consumption of non-renewable resources, the controlled emission of contaminant agents, the maintenance of biological diversity, the health of the inhabitants, and the preservation of flora and fauna.' They warn that sustainability

is not mere wishful thinking, but a task which requires serious and constant effort from all concerned. Thus, achieving sustainability is neither a once-and-for-all fix, nor is it a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a context-based *process* which requires periodic reinforcement, without which there could be a reversal.

A group of top Swedish scientists under the auspices of The Natural Step Organisation listed four conditions for attaining a sustainable society. They are that,

- *Materials from the earth's crust must not be systematically increased in the ecosphere*
- *Materials produced by society must not be systematically increased in the ecosphere*
- *The physical basis for the productivity and diversity of nature must not be systematically diminished*
- *There must be fair and efficient use of resources with respect to meeting human needs* (Bell & Morse 2003:6).

This means that due care should be taken to ensure that disruptions to natural systems are kept to the barest minimum; the products and by-products of human interventions in nature (including wastes) should not be allowed to aggravate the condition of the ecosphere. This systematic increase of materials from the earth's crust and the attendant wastes are some of the primary sources of polluting the environment, thus, the call to limit their effusion.

There is hope offered by science and technology to tackle the problems of unsustainability (Martinez-Alier 2002:1), but this has been a subject of concern, particularly because of the harmful effect and sometimes indiscriminate use of the products of science and technology. These include the destructive weapons of war, agricultural pesticides, genetic modification, and so on (Bell and Morse 1999:7).

Scholars have been critical of the concept of sustainable development for being contradictory in terms. The argument is that development cannot be sustainable at the same time due to the imbedded changes it brings in its wake, often impacting negatively on the environment (David Bookless, 2007:37). Others want to see development capped, despite agreeing that 'human societies cannot remain static', and 'the aspirations and expectations that compromise a need constantly shift' (Bell and Morse 2003:3). This leads to the idea of trade-offs.

Perhaps the real compromise should be that such development that is deemed sustainable is prosecuted with popular participation, not a top-down prescription (Bell & Morse 2003:4). This kind of top-down heavy-handedness has been roundly criticised in the relationship between the government of Nigeria and communities, and between the multinational oil corporations operating in the Niger Delta region and their host communities. This criticism is contained in the 2011 report of the UNEP on the pollution associated with the activities of Shell in Ogoni.¹⁰ Interestingly the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development takes this problem into account when it recommends that:

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided. (UNCED, 1992)

One important missing item is the place of faith, spirituality or religion. This gives the impression that people of faith, and religion in general, have no say in matters relating

¹⁰ The International Crisis Group and the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility have both condemned such patronising and over-bearing stance of the government and the oil companies.

to the environment. Christians have argued that the care of the environment (God's creation) cannot be complete without acknowledging the role God and the people of faith play. Therefore, their reasoning is that:

If environmental problems are as serious as the experts make out, Christians clearly have a need to focus their response as a matter of both survival and significant apologetics. But there is a deeper issue: if creation care is a divine mandate on all humankind, and if Christ's saving work really did involve reconciling to the Father 'all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Col. 1:20), then neglecting creation care is a sin and not merely an option in an overcrowded agenda (Berry, 2000:15)

Despite the growing acceptance of the idea of sustainability, there are sceptics who believe it is a farce, and at the best very suspicious. They think that it 'is an empty concept, lacking firm substance and containing embedded ideological positions that are, under the best interpretation, condescending and paternalistic' (Fortune and Hughes, 1997:125-130). But with more evidence and research converging on the reality of a global warming, climate change, and increasing unsustainable state of the world's environment even erstwhile sceptics and critics are beginning to be won over (Meadows, *et al*, 2004:115).

1.3.2 Weak and Strong Sustainability

Sustainability could be deemed weak or strong, depending on what is factored into the definition. It is strong when the focus is strictly ecological, in this case not even the associated economic cost of attaining sustainability is considered. It deals with physical parameters such as biodiversity and carrying capacity (Bell & Morse 2003:13). On the contrary weak sustainability, which is economics driven, takes into serious consideration the cost benefit analysis of what is expended to achieve sustainability (Bell & Morse 2003:13). In this case trade-offs are accommodated. The question however is whether this payment mitigates in real terms the harm done to the

environment. Tisdell 1988:373-384¹¹ questions the idea of trade-off based on the concept of not cheating on our children, wondering:

What trade-offs, if any, are acceptable between present generations and future ones.¹²

This supposedly makes a strong case for the concept of sustainable development which takes into account the needs of both the present and future generations.

The question therefore is whether the Niger delta environment in its present condition is sustainable or not. Available data about oil-related pollution discussed in chapter three and four cast doubt, suggesting a bleak future if things continue in this direction. From the foregoing it has been argued that an environment can be termed sustainable by observing how changes affect the three sustainable indicators, namely – ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity, and biodiversity (Bell & Morse 1999:18).

1.4 Factors Fuelling Environmental Degradation In The Niger Delta

Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is primarily caused by pollution emanating from the oil and gas exploration activities. This has polluted the land, air and water quality, and endangering the life of the people, rendered the area unsustainable. These have resulted in crop failure, decimation of fish stocks in the rivers and swamps, and the destruction of the ecosystem. These have extensively been documented by expert environmental surveys conducted by different local and international groups. One of such surveys/reports conducted by the United Nations Environmental Program was released in 2011. Its significance is underscored by the

¹¹ Tisdell, C. 1988. Sustainable Development: differing perspectives of ecologists and economists, and relevance to LDCs', *World Development*, vol 16(3), pp373-384.

¹² These questions were reproduced in Bell and Morse 1999:13

fact that it has become the basis of most recent agitations for the clean-up of the Niger Delta and of the government's response to the crisis.¹³

Apart from the ordinary negative impact of oil pollution, other concomitant issues have been exposed as exacerbating the state of the environment. Some of those discussed in this research include poverty, corruption, and general state of neglect. These have also been discussed, alongside a couple more, in this section.

1.4.1 The Degradation, Peaceful Protests and the Rise of Militancy

Before the Niger Delta crisis birthed a number of non-state armed agitators, the affected communities, supported by civil society groups, had galvanised themselves to protest against the degradation, neglect, and perceived injustices against the Niger Delta and its people. Sunday B. Lugard (2016) has interpreted these issues from a property rights point of view, pinning it down to a 'clash of property and environmental rights'. These legal and regulatory ramifications have been given some more attention in Chapter 3.4.4.3. Agitators carried out their advocacy through peaceful protests, petitions, sit-ins, and public demonstrations in advocacy for a better environment (Paki & Ebienfa, 2011:1). Some of the ethnic groups such as the Ogoni and the Ijaw intellectualised and crystallised their demands into what is now known as the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990)¹⁴ and the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, respectively.¹⁵ But government highhandedness and insensitivity built frustration in the populace,

¹³ For more details see: file:///C:/Users/user/Documents/Grand%20Research%20Folder/Downloads/Chap%205%20Materials/UNEP_Ogoni%20EA%20Report.pdf. Accessed 14/06/2016

¹⁴ Source: <http://www.bebor.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Ogoni-Bill-of-Rights.pdf>. Accessed 23-11-2015

¹⁵ Source: <http://www.iycworldwide.org/Kaiama%20Declaration.pdf>. Accessed 23-11-2015.

which eventually gave way to an armed insurgency with a plethora of demands (Ikelegbe, 2005a:151-181; Ako, 2011:45).

The militants claimed among other grievances that their aim was to defend the rights and opportunities of the people of the region and to press for the remediation of their environment. Many countries, including the United States of America, expressed concern over happenings in the so-called 'New Gulf' which they viewed as being of strategic importance to their interests (Boas, 2011:118). For that reason, the US took particular interest in the way things unfolded in that region (Cesarz, Morrison, and Cooke, 2003:1).¹⁶

Contrary to the expectation of the government, the use of force did not lead to the end of the insurgency, it actually exacerbated the situation. As a result, the government declared a unilateral amnesty, with the promise of pardoning the militants if they laid down their arms. Since the beginning of the implementation of the amnesty program in 2009 there was cessation of military hostilities from both sides for a while. However, the periodic outbreak of violence and the kidnapping of civilians have remained a regular feature of the landscape. The Niger Delta militants seem to have been largely pacified by the government with hefty security contracts to guard the same pipelines they were previously sabotaging. Several news media have also reported how, for example, a notable militant Mr Government Ekpemupolo (alias Tompolo) was given the contract to acquire naval vessels for the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) (Falayi, 2014; Premium

¹⁶ The most prominent of the militant groups were the umbrella Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by the elusive Gbomo Jomo; the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Dokubo Asari; and the Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) led by Government Ekpemupolo. They waged a war that hurt Nigeria on all front – economically by drastically reducing its oil earnings; and politically by embarrassing Nigeria in the comity of nations; and militarily by making the Nigerian Armed Forces look grossly ineffective.

Times, 2014, and Vanguard 2014).¹⁷ While these selective political appeasements by the government may have bought over certain key reactionary elements of the Niger Delta militancy, it is doubtful whether this is a sustainable solution in the long-term. This is particularly in the light of fresh attacks in 2016, seven years after the amnesty-initiated truce. This worrying trend launched by a previously unknown Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) since April 2016 has, at the moment, lost Nigeria its place to Angola as Africa's largest oil producer.¹⁸

The ideological underpinning of the militants has been questioned after they accepted the amnesty without the fundamental issues of degradation and underdevelopment being addressed, and at risk of the issues being overlooked (Obi & Rustad, 2011:205). The concern is that their hubris was probably a ploy to get government patronage, exemplified by those juicy contracts awarded the leadership of ex-militants.

The critical incident that led to a more fundamental structural policy change on the environment was the dumping of toxic radioactive waste by an Italian ship in the port town of Koko in Edo State in 1987. The government of General Ibrahim Babangida was proactive in engaging their Italian counterparts who ensured that the wastes were promptly removed. However, according to Paul Osuyi in a Sun newspaper article not much was done in terms of decontaminating and remediating the area, or even to test

¹⁷ The national newspapers that carried it include: The Punch of December 13, 2014, titled '*Ex-militant, Tompolo, buys six warships*', see: <http://www.punchng.com/news/ex-militant-tompolo-buys-six-warships/>; Premium Times of the same date, titled '*Norway sells warships, combat boats to ex-militant leader, Tompolo*' see, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/173222-norway-sells-warships-combat-boats-ex-militant-leader-tompolo.html>; and Vanguard of December 17, 2014 '*Tompolo purchased war ships on behalf of NIMASA — DG*' <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/12/tompolo-purchased-war-ships-behalf-nimasa-dg/#sthash.y15PSVeF.dpuf>. Accessed 08/05/2015.

¹⁸ See: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/niger-delta-avengers-sabotage-oil-output-1465165361>; <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/06/new-niger-delta-militant-group-warns-widespread-attacks/>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36414036>.

the residents for radiation contamination.¹⁹ This is bearing in mind the impact of the toxic waste on the officials of the Nigerian Ports Authority who performed the removal task (George-Kalu & Kalu 2012:362). The public outcry following this Koko incident led to the creation of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) which was a precursor to the establishment of the new Federal Ministry of the Environment (Ojo & Gaskiya, 2003:620-621).

Although the pollution associated with the oil and gas industry has been around for perhaps as long as the industry itself, the consciousness of popular participation among Nigerians in caring for the environment was first truly awakened by the War Against Indiscipline (WAI).²⁰ Cardinal among the environmental action they initiated was the monthly sanitation (Clean Up) day, which is still being observed by a number of states in the country.²¹ However the continuous deplorable condition of the environment is a clear indication that this too as a long-term solution is not working. Thus there is need for a different approach, such as the church can bring.

1.4.2 The role of the legal system

The role of the legal system in exacerbating the already tense situation introduces another angle to the Niger Delta crisis. Expectedly, the mining and allocation of

¹⁹ Osuyi, P (2014) Koko toxic waste: Indigenes still live with nightmare 27 years after, *The Sun*, July 6 <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/koko-toxic-waste-indigenes-still-live-nightmare-27-years/>

²⁰ This was a mass mobilisation campaign initiated and prosecuted by the military government of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon to stamp out all forms of indiscipline, public disorder and corruption. It was empowered by Decree No. 4 of 1983, and within two years of inception (1983-1985) Nigerians were getting used to orderly queues and the proper disposal of wastes.

²¹ However the on-the-spot extra-judicial corporal punishments, including flogging, meted on offenders by soldiers did not endear the project with Nigeria, it created fear than lasting attitudinal change. The so-called WAI Brigade gradually fizzled with the overthrow of that government, being ousted by the new General Ibrahim Babangida's regime's MAMSER Brigade. MAMSER stood for Mass Mobilization for Self-reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery. It was the propaganda arm of the Babangida administration set under Professor Jerry Gana to mobilise the masses to participate in the political transition program. They were also supposed to re-orientate Nigerians on the core values represented in its title.

Nigeria's resources have been guided by legislations that have had far-reaching implication for the environment. That is one of the reasons why Niger Delta agitators denounce the laws regulating the activities of the extractive industry in Nigeria as having been drafted to support the marginalisation of oil bearing communities and leading to the environmental issues. (Ako, 2011:45). Their human and environmental rights seem to be secondary in the course of the extraction of oil and gas, and the distribution of the revenue accruing from them.

Beginning with the colonial era it seems that the concern was about the protection of the economic interests of the colonising powers.²² Little or no attention was paid to the environmental impact of the licenced extractive activities. Colonial laws dispossessed local people who traditionally had the title of their resources to the advantage of the metropole (Burns, 1978:149; Muritala, 2012:116). An example is the Minerals Oil Ordinance No. 17 of 1914, subsequently amended in 1925, 1950 and 1958, 'principally gave oil exploration monopoly in Nigeria to British firms' (Omeje, 2006:35). More far-reaching was the Mineral Ordinance of 1945 that vested ownership and control of all mineral resources on the British Crown (Omeje, 2005:36).

Nigeria inherited the above colonial legal framework, which inspired laws such as the Petroleum Act 2004. The first schedule of the Act provides that 'The entire ownership and control of all petroleum in, under or upon any lands to which this section applies shall be vested in the State' (LFN, 2004:1).²³ The connection between the Nigerian legal

²² The partitioning of Africa benefited European powers in many ways including assured sources of cheap raw materials for their home industries (Muritala 2012:116). The stakes were so high that the British traders bought out their French counterparts along the lower Niger to the coast in Nigeria (Burns, 1978:149).

²³ And by land it is meant: all land (including land covered by water) which

- (a) is in Nigeria; or
- (b) is under the territorial waters of Nigeria; or

system and its impact on Niger Delta's environmental crisis has been explored further in Chapters 3.4.4.3, 4.5.3, and 4.6.5.

1.4.3 Inter-tribal Rivalry and the quest for Resource Control

Nigeria has not known long-term peace since independence in 1960 as the squabble of who controls the national treasury has dominated the economic, political, and socio-cultural landscape since the late 1950s when oil was discovered in commercial quantities. Therefore, since Nigeria's independence from British rule in 1960, the control of the instrument of state has always been of contention among the over two hundred bickering ethnic groups that the British coerced into the entity called Nigeria.²⁴

As early as 1966, Major Adaka Boro led a twelve-day insurrection that declared a Niger Delta Republic (Ako, 2011:45). He was promptly arrested and incarcerated and was only released by the government to help them prosecute the civil war. The weakness of regulatory institutions in the oil industry exposed the vast oil wealth to abuse, and the stake became increasingly high for the control of the instrument of state (Ako, 2011:51). Access to these instruments is tantamount to control over the distribution of the revenue from the resources (Omeje, 2006:1-11).

At another level the argument was regarding where the control should reside among the tiers of government – the local government authority, State government, or the federal government according to Kenneth Omeje (2006:35). The question of who

(c) forms part of the continental shelves; or

(d) forms part of the Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria (LFN, 2004:1)

²⁴ At inception some ethnic groups, especially the majority Hausa-Fulani in the north of the country had raised concern about their preparedness for the competition that was to follow self-rule. Minority ethnic groups, in the south, particularly those of the Niger Delta had also expressed worries about the overwhelming influence of their more populous Igbo neighbours.

controls the resources extends to the role of the local oil-bearing communities. But, as earlier indicated in Chapter 1.4.2, the Nigerian constitution favours a central control and allocation by the federal government of Nigeria.

This nationalisation and centralisation of the country's resources meant that the different tribal groups vied for its control, or at least to position themselves to have a say on how it is allocated.²⁵ The scheming to position kinsfolks, as well as the 'politics of states creation' are a couple of ways that the competing tribes have used to gain advantage over others (Ibaba, 2011:73). That seems to explain the unending demand for the creation of more states as a means of balancing the political equation. Consequently, more states have been created by succeeding regimes to the present thirty six states structure provided for in the 1999 Constitution, more from primordial tribal and political considerations than from objective economic considerations of their viability (Vande, 2012:39). The more states a geopolitical zone or ethnic group has, the more resources it is able to corner for itself. It is, therefore, common for an aggrieved section of the country to accuse the others (in power) of marginalisation. All of the above factors are symptomatic of deeper issues attributable to corruption, tribalism, and nepotism in the nation's polity.

²⁵ One would think that the perennial political rifts prevalent in the Nigerian polity would have abated fifty five years since gaining independence from Britain, but the national elections of April 2015 highlighted the deep-seated divisions still existing in the country. The incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian contested the election under the banner of the PDP, against Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim of the APC. Notwithstanding the apparent tacit alliance between the Southwest Yoruba and the north the campaign were largely dominated by the perennial north-south divide, with the northerners vowing to wrest power back from the south. Eight years of Olusegun Obasanjo and nearly six years of Goodluck Jonathan ensured that the presidency had remained in the south since the inception of the so-called fourth republic in 1999.

1.5 Making The Case For The Participation Of The Presbyterian Church

The ultimate contribution of this thesis is about making the case for the active involvement of the body of Christ in Nigeria, especially that of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN), in seeking a lasting solution to Niger Delta's environmental problems. The pervasive presence of the church across Nigeria, and its dominance in the area studied, presupposes that its influence can make a huge difference in that context. Whether this is possible or not, and the nature of any possible involvement, is what this research unravels.

The mission history of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, from its antecedence as the Church of Scotland Mission, is steeped in an appetite for human development and social reforms.²⁶ The four-pronged agenda that undergirded their mission outreach were education, medical work, agriculture, and social justice. Schools were built to empower the local population and prepare them for the emerging colonial civil service bureaucracy; hospitals were established to ensure that people had a good quality of life; and farm estates sprung up to provide food and economic empowerment. Their courageous work and sacrifice stopped the killing of twins and reintegrated their mothers (Johnston, 1988:303-307; Ndukwe, 2008:38).²⁷ These outreaches did benefit and enhance the church's mission as well as build the structures of the society. Olo

²⁶ The establishment of a mission station in Bonny (a coastal town in the Niger Delta) in 1865 was the greatest success of the Niger Mission championed by returnee ex-slaves such as Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (Isichei, 1995:173). Further on the eastern flank the dwindling socio-political and economic fortunes of the Efik kingdoms of Duke Town and Creek Town had led their monarchs to request for missionaries in 1846. The economic downturn following the abolition of slave trade was one of the underlying factors. Apart from wanting to fill the void left by the cessation of this nefarious trade they also wanted literacy and western ways for their people (Kalu, 1996b:1-2; Aye, 1987:16)

²⁷ Olo Ndukwe with a broad stroke paints the picture of how with the cooperation of the local people, the impact of their mission did cover a wide sphere of human endeavour – social, cultural, and economic. He says:

‘With the co-operation of the indigenes, the missionaries built schools, hospitals, clinics and health-care centres, along with colonies for leprosy and tuberculosis. At that initial stage, the missionaries expressed a philosophy, which seemed to demonstrate a practice-based relationship with their hosts. Such a philosophy allowed them to co-operate and recognize the humanity in their hosts. They also introduced extensive and mechanized agriculture as well as recreation and recreational facilities into some Nigerian communities. Above all other things, The PCN mission pioneered the quest, which ended human sacrifice and the killing of twins. It sought to substantiate the Christian respect for the dignity of human life within some Nigerian communities’ (Ndukwe, 2008:38).

Ndukwe's views is that of a church that had 'a practice-based relationship with their hosts' (Ndukwe, 2008:38). By empowering the local people, Christian missions were actually anti-imperialistic as they challenged the subsisting dependency culture of colonialism.²⁸

As issues of the environment have become one of the most critical challenges facing the world it demands that more parties play a part in finding a solution to them. Lynn White, Jr. (1967) wrote a seminal paper in the *Science* journal which criticised Christianity (particularly its Western strand) as the historical root of the world's ecological crisis churches. Since then, Christian apologetics have laboured hard to correct that impression. Lynn White's argument was that modern science and technology was originally cast within the matrix of Christian theology, after the faith had supplanted other traditions. Christianity should therefore be liable being that the knowledge and products science and technology have wreaked havoc on earth's ecology.

It is significant that Lynn White's hypothesis, six decades ago, was made in a scientific journal, and not a theological or religious studies publication. Thus, he took the debate from its majorly science context to an open platform. Also significant is the fact that this most vociferous critic of Christianity did acknowledge that the solution will

²⁸ But as Ogbu Kalu (2006:xiii-xxvi, 110-128) narrates, the Church has been viewed from both perspectives of pro- and anti-establishment depending on the observer, but it is hardly apathetic. Although it is arguable, and bearing in mind the Church's contribution to society, there is truth in Adrian Hastings' assertion that 'Black Africa is today totally inconceivable apart from the presence of Christianity (1990:208). In other words the history of church and society have become so interwoven that they are now inextricable. Nevertheless the church has sought to maintain its independence of the state. Contrarily it has not boded well for mission whenever the church and the state have been seen by ordinary people to be in collusion. The negative activity of the state has had a similar negative public perception of the church. For example the deprivation of local people from direct access to trading opportunities in favour of their more established European counterparts, such as the Royal Niger Company, had a negative impact on the growth of Christianity. In some instances Christian converts renounced their new faith and reverted to their traditional worship in protest. A prominent example was the renunciation of Christianity by Frederick William Koko at his coronation as the King of Brass (Nembe) in 1889 (Isichei 1995:175).

ultimately be a religious one, positing that, 'Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not' (White, 1967:1207).

It is not surprising then that Pope Francis issued an encyclical on Climate Change on the 24th of May, 2015 urging united action of all people to arrest the menace which threatens what he calls 'our common home'. He acknowledged the contribution of science and technology, but emphasised that they do not have all the answers to our present ecological problems. With a tone of urgency he appealed for

'a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all' (Francis, 2015:12).

He therefore made a moral case for action, urging the 'whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development' (Francis, 2015:12). Throwing down the gauntlet in this manner is to say to all stakeholders that the church is ready to engage and not just stay confined in its little corner. This also challenges the notion that the church (a so-called sky-God religion) is only concerned with the saving of souls and preparing them for the afterlife and not concerned with the here and now.

In reference to this encyclical, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, opined that 'Caring for Mother Earth is a moral issue. We must change how we use Mother Earth's resources, and live in a manner that is sustainable'.²⁹ Interestingly, Mr Ban Ki-Moon met with Pope Francis in the Vatican on April 28 before the encyclical and both leaders

²⁹ Source: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/blog/2015/10/caring-planet-moral-issue-un-chief-says-bolivia/>. Accessed 31/05/2016.

affirmed a mutual position to work for a positive outcome at the year-end climate change conference in Paris.³⁰

This unified position from two of our world's prime citizens makes the case for sustainability a strong one. Notably, they both emphasised that the challenge of climate change is no longer an issue for scientists alone, but actually a moral one. The significance and timing of these meetings and releases – just before the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP 21) of November to December 2015 – cannot be overemphasised, especially in the light of the landmark endorsements of the Climate Change Agreement?

Moralising the environmental discourse is not, altogether, new. Michael Northcott (2007) had dealt extensively on this theme in his book 'A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming.' He (a professor of science) unabashedly made the case for a different approach to the climate change and ecological discourse. The moral case, in my view, is a powerful tool that could appeal to the human conscience. And for Christians, it opens up the space for them to bring in their unique faith-based contribution. This should be done, not as an alternative to science, but in addition to it. On the economic and structural standpoint, it challenges the cold, heartless, mechanical structures of global capital, and brings its entire system to a soul-searching moment.

The Niger Delta environmental crisis is difficult and this is not because there are not enough laws to regulate the extractive industry in Nigeria. It is not intractable because there is not enough breakthrough in science and technology to tackle the pollution.

³⁰ Source: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/blog/2015/05/leaders-gather-vatican-historic-meeting-climate-change-sustainable-development/>. 31/05/2016.

The global oil and gas industry has the latest cutting edge technology that can make the difference, but operators fail to adhere to best practice (Idemudia, 2011:181). The problem is not protracted because there are not enough regulatory structures – there are actually ample institutions whose roles sometimes over-lap, yet as argued in Chapters three and four they lack the capacity to do their jobs (Ako, 2011:51).

The above problematics suggest that the missing solution is a moral and theological one, which is what the church can contribute. Its intervention will confront and challenge the apparent lack of political will. It will confront the corruption and greed that is eating up the fabric of the Nigerian nation. It will challenge the belligerent parties to give peace a chance and to encourage a lasting solution to a problem that is doing no one any good. All these factors are considered in this thesis and make a case for a strong PCN involvement.

The networking power of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the umbrella organisation of Nigerian churches, is also a critical resource on which the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria could build its involvement in concert with other churches. This grouping has operated as a giant civil society since inception, harnessing and representing to government the views of Christians and those who feel discriminated against (Kalu, 2006:xxiv). The PCN as one of the key members of CAN has, in addition, its own structures (boards, directorates and departments) that places it in good stead to intervene in Niger Delta's environmental crisis. Yet, the extent of the impact of

these structures on the Niger Delta environmental question, vis-à-vis the foundations laid by their forebears, is open to debate.³¹

1.6 African Traditional Perspectives On The Environment

The Niger Delta environmental crisis raises questions about the nature and role of traditional environmental governance. This is even as it is recognised that traditional African societies had ethics of nature that helped them over the centuries to survive the vagaries of their environment (Ademiluyi & Asiyanbola 2012:334). How did things go wrong, if the people had a sense of affinity with their environment?

Commentators believe that the notion of care for the environment is embedded in the people's culture and traditions. For example Maurice N. Amutabi highlights that among the Abaluyia of Western Kenya environmental consciousness was rooted in their traditional architecture.

'The selection of construction sites, the choice of construction materials, the design of buildings, the position of houses in the homestead, among others, are aspects guided by rich, elaborate and respected cultural norms of the Abaluyia. Many of the norms, it has been established, were consciously environmentally friendly' (Amutabi, 2012:279).

The same notion is true of Nigerian tribes, including the Kalabari, Okrika, Ikwerre, Igbo, Yoruba, and the Ogoni (Ajai, 2012:94, Idowu, 1973:137, Page n.d.:49, Parrinder, 1962:12, Saro-Wiwa, 1992:12). Chapter Seven of this thesis examines how Africans perceive their

³¹ As at 2013 the PCN General Assembly (GA) and its Executive Committee (GAEC) operated four apex boards, namely the Board of Trustees (BOT), Board of Personnel and Training (BPT), Board of Faith and Order (BFO), the Finance Board, and the Medical Board. In addition it had five directorates that delivered diaconal missional duties of the church, in the sense of the hands-on approach discussed in the preceding paragraph. They are the National Directorate of Mission (NDM), the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D, as well known as Presby-Aids), and the Directorate of Information and Public Affairs that oversees the activities of communication the church's vision and mission to the world. The PCN maintains a number of quasi directorates or desks (departments) led by Co-ordinators: for Children ministries, Lay Development and Leadership Training, Women ministries, Men's ministries, Music ministries, Presbyterian Students Fellowship (PSF), and for youth ministries under the Presbyterian Young People's Association of Nigeria (PYPAN). The church also runs two limited liability companies – the Presby Press Ltd for all publication activities and the Presby Farms Ltd that oversees its agricultural estates.

environment. From this examination has emerged cultural principles that can enable the PCN to contextualise an ecological theology of sustainability. Two of these principles from the Igbo cultural milieu – *Egbe bere*, *Ugo bere* and *Ebe Onye bi ka O N'awachi* – stood out in this regard.³² The PCN, being thickly immersed in that socio-cultural current of the Niger Delta cannot afford to ignore the potentials it offers. However, it is contestable, how much these impulses shape PCN's mission and ministry despite its claim of strong African roots (P&P G-02.0600).

The question is: why is the environmental crisis being experienced in the region, despite these imbedded traditional understandings of creation care? It will be suggested in this thesis that the strong cultural bonds, taboos and sanctions that hitherto governed the environment and its resources have waned considerable.

1.7 Justification for the Research

This research closes the knowledge gap regarding the involvement of the body of Christ towards resolving the Niger Delta crisis. Although there are a few academic researches investigating the contribution of the Church in handling the conflict, none of them is specific to the development of an eco-theological solution. A recent thesis by Osigwe Nkem in 2012 on 'Crude oil, conflict and Christian witness in Nigeria: Baptist and Pentecostal perspectives', focused on Baptist and Pentecostal churches. It made a passing acknowledgement of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN). In addition, Osuigwe's focus was about crude oil and conflict, and the contribution of just three

³² *Ebe Onye bi ka O na-awachi* means, a person cares for, mends, or protects where they live (their surroundings). And *Egbe bere Ugo bere*, *nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwapu ya* (in full), when translated means 'let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, whichever one prevents the other from perching, let his wings fall off'. The former (*Egbe bere*) emphasises justice, equity and mutual respect and coexistence, while the latter (*Ebe Onye bi*) leans heavily on the notion of individual responsibility that aggregates into collective action.

local congregations in this regard. The limitations of his research meant little or no attention was given to the specific subject of environmental sustainability.

Another piece of doctoral research into the response of the Church to the problems of the environment, was by Cyprian Alokwu (2009) of the Anglican Communion, Diocese of Awka. He constructed what he called a 'Nigerian indigenous *Oikotheology*'. His concern was about how the Anglican Church, especially his diocese could tap into a mix of local and biblical theologies to respond to what he described as the double earth crisis, namely, a degraded environment and poverty. Obviously, his focus was neither the Niger Delta, nor the PCN.

Thus, there is a dearth of scholarly resources and a gap to be filled with regards to the response of churches to the environmental problems in the Niger Delta, especially the specific role of the PCN as one of the earliest mainline denominations in country. It is this paucity of rigorous research that became an incentive to embark on this research.

But acknowledgement must be given to the efforts of other Christian groups already doing some kind of work regarding the Niger Delta. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) organised a conference that considered the impact of the Niger Delta conflict on Nigeria's body polity. While decrying the cost of the conflict on the people and the environment, they condemned the injustices and marginalisation suffered by the people of the region. The bishops, therefore, called on the Federal Government to ensure equity and fairness in the allocation of resources generated from the Niger

Delta. The Catholic Church moreover called on the government and the oil companies to see to the remediation of polluted areas (CSN, 2006).³³

Also, in 2010 the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)³⁴ released a report, 'Shell in the Niger Delta: A Framework for Change'. Although the study was sponsored by Shell, the ECCR report came to the conclusion that Shell was primarily responsible for the level of degradation suffered in its areas of operation in the Niger Delta. The case studies employed buttressed Shell's failure to live up to its own standards of operation (ECCR 2010).

Laudable as these contributions are, they can, in some sense be categorised as top-down approaches, having been commissioned and executed by 'experts'³⁵ with little or no ownership by people at the grassroots.³⁶ That is why this current research, based on grounded theory, has sought to capture those ordinary voices, not particularly in the margins, yet in the grassroots of Niger Delta communities. It is drawn from mostly Presbyterian lay people – professionals, traders, artisans, unemployed graduates and students – male and female, youth and adult alike, from parishes in and around Port Harcourt, Rivers State.³⁷ Christians from other denominations have also been interviewed for multi-perspectival (triangulation) purposes. A number of ordained ministers of these churches have also been interviewed. It is these voices that drive the entire thesis.

³³ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Nigeria: The Travesty of Oil and Gas Wealth, Lagos: Gazub Prints Limited, 2006

³⁴ The ECCR describes itself as 'a church-based investor coalition and membership organisation working for economic justice, environmental stewardship, and corporate and investor responsibility'

³⁵ 'Experts' is employed here to denote all other category of people besides the ordinary people in the grassroots of the community.

³⁶ They do not necessarily reflect the voices of Christians in local congregations across the Niger Delta: those who experience the daily realities of life in the region.

³⁷ This was inspired by the fact that the other mentioned pieces of research and environmental action do not tell the story of one of the country's earliest mission churches, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (formerly the Church of Scotland Mission).

In summary, the justification for this research and its intellectual contribution is in three folds. Firstly, the research aims to add to the body of scholarship on the Niger Delta and its environmental problems. Secondly, it hopes to make a contribution towards the development of a local holistic ecotheology from below for the PCN in particular, and the Niger Delta in general. The third contribution the thesis hopes to make is in the area of providing the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria with the intellectual and theological scaffold upon which to build a broader response to the issues of the environment.

1.8 Methodology and Methods

While the natural sciences have been renowned for their use of quantitative methodologies, the social sciences and the humanities have tended more towards the qualitative. However, these intra- and inter-disciplinary battles are increasingly less relevant, particularly because real life experience shows that it is hard to divorce so-called objective research considerations from subjective ones. It has become useful and desirable to combine methods. The quantitative method permitting generalisations and comparisons with cases outside the specific context, while the qualitative enabling, beyond general considerations, to examine what lies beneath the surface. The latter questions why participants responded in the manner they did.

Furthermore, despite that this research is mainly qualitative in nature, the combination of methods has allowed one to avoid a straight-jacket approach which could have been detrimental to the richness of the research (Bryman & Burgess 1994, Kumar 2005, and Walliman 2005). The data collected from the questionnaire distributed among church members (See Appendix 1), complements the result of the interviews conducted mostly with a wider audience that included ordinary church members, church leaders, and community leaders.

The survey instrument used was an adaptation of the New Environmental (or as was later renamed, Ecological) Paradigm (NEP) questionnaire administered in 2009 and 2016. The original NEP was used to ascertain the extent of a paradigmatic shift in the way the population had begun thinking of the environment. This new perception was to the effect that, contrary to earlier understanding, the earth's resources were actually finite and exhaustible.³⁸ Pelstring (1997) sums this situation thus:

At the time, many social scientists believed that a "paradigmatic" shift – a change in many people's way of thinking – was occurring. People were becoming disenchanted with the so-called "Dominant Social Paradigm," which emphasized human ability to control and manage the environment, limitless natural resources, private property rights, and unlimited industrial growth. The New Environmental Paradigm, on the other hand, emphasized environmental protection, limited industrial growth, and population control, among other issues. This thinking was partly behind the birth of worldwide environmental awareness campaigns such as the Earth Day, the first of which was held in 1970 (Pelstring 1997)³⁹.

Convinced about the emergence of a new environmental paradigm (NEP) Dunlap and Van Liere developed a scale to measure it. This has since been revised and used by several other researchers in different contexts and cultures (Dunlap, *et al*, 2000).⁴⁰ It was based on its earlier religious and theological application that I decided to use the instrument among Christians in the Niger Delta, especially in the light of growing local

³⁸ The development of this scale dates back to the 1960s and 1970s based on a growing perception that the rate of economic growth and its impact on society and the environment were not sustainable in the long-term. As a result some social scientists such as Dunlap and Van Liere began to observe a kind of emerging culture shift from the prevailing paradigm. At about the same time was the publication of *The Limits to Growth* by Donella H Meadows, *et al*, in 1972.

³⁹ "In 1978, social scientists Dunlap and Van Liere published an article in *The Journal of Environmental Education* that summarized their efforts to measure a fairly new environmental mind-set they and other researchers believed was becoming a predominant influence." For more, see Lisa Pelstring, *The NEP and Measurement Validity*, Spring 1997, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Pelstring/validity.htm>, downloaded 25/01/2011

⁴⁰ Rushton & Hodson (2012) used it to measure:

whether there is a link between faith and environmental values and understanding in Church of England ordinands. Using a questionnaire survey ordinands were asked to respond to the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP). In addition they responded to statements about the importance of environmental issues and ecology within their faith and to biblically based interpretations of environmental issues (Rushton & Hodson, 2012:1)

[Ordinands are students in theological training towards ordination into the Anglican ministry. I adopted the instrument used by Elizabeth Rushton in 2012].

awareness of massive environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. Like Rushton & Hudson (2012) I added a number of biblically related environmental statements with the aim of examining the interplay between the faith and value for the environment. And although the NEP is generic in nature,⁴¹ the scale has the capacity to determine whether people's attitude towards the environment is apathetic, pro- or anti-environmental. Therefore, the question to be answered is whether people's faith has any relationship with how they relate with, or respond to, their environment. Thus, it is hoped that the results will assist in the formulation of a theology of the environment that is locally rooted.

Interviews were also employed, as already stated, for the gathering of primary data, and the results have been set out as a narrative enquiry. In this method the

narrative enquirer...seeks to illuminate rich yet often overlooked or taken for granted storied knowledges, especially of those ranked lower on the hierarchy with textualized organizational knowledges most often at the top (Hancock and Epston, 2008:490).

For similar concerns the Lausanne Movement in its meeting of 2004 in Thailand came to acknowledge that:

the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables (Lausanne 2005:5).

The intention of the research instruments (interviews, conversations and surveys) used was to let ordinary church members of the church tell their own stories. It attempts to reflect the views of ordinary people in the grassroots and not that of the experts, even though some of the respondents are experts in their own fields of endeavour. The data highlights how ordinary Presbyterians have been affected by the Niger Delta

⁴¹ This is its asset rather than its liability as some would argue, being that it can be adapted to serve any context. I employed the same revised version used in 2008 by Elizabeth Rushton, a student of the Oxford Brookes University.

environmental crisis and how they responded to it. It also shows how they have been able to navigate the rough waters of theology to make sense of the environmental challenges facing them. They bring varied perspectives on the issues, including the sort of theological underpinning that informs their actions. It was observed that some of those thoughts were truly profound although articulated off-the-cuff. It is important to note that a vital theoretical assumption of this thesis is along the lines of what Paul Gundani (2007) has called a *Theology from q*. It argues that that theology can be done from the margins, by non-professional theologians within the grassroots of Christian community. The intellectual underpinning being that, with or without formal theological education, ordinary people are 'doing theology' (Reader, 1994:1) within their everyday encounters. They 'do' *Theology from below*, which in other words could be referred to as *pedestrian theology*, but is by no means pedestrian. It is theology formulated 'on the go' in the process of life's experiences, yet it is not devoid of the mediation of scripture. It is theology in simple language, accessible to all, without the garb of esotericism. Such ordinary believers may not realise that they are actually doing theology, and certainly may not claim that they are making any theological contribution, yet that is what they are doing.

This is especially necessary given the context of the PCN which, as Olo Ndukwe (2008:44-46) argues, was (at its inception) built on a shaky intellectual and theological foundation.⁴² By 2008, even after a century and a half of its inception, the PCN still had less than twenty PhD holders in theology (Ndukwe, 2008:46). Thus the need to support

⁴² This is based on the fact that the very first team of missionaries who arrived had only one ordained minister with theological education in the person of Rev Hope M. Waddell. Others comprised of a few artisans who doubles as bible interpreters and communicators without the requisite training. 'Samuel Edgerly was a catechist; Andrew Chilsom was his assistant; Edward Miller was a carpenter; while G.B. Waddell was Rev Hope's houseboy. For reasons, which lie beyond the scope of this study, all members of this group participated in Bible interpretation and communication' (Ndukwe, 2008:46).

the development of a theology from below, what John Reader (1994) calls 'local theology'. Essentially, these believers are already exposed to, and engaging with Scripture within their Christian communities. It is in that sense that Simon Chan argues that,

Scripture sets the initial trajectory for the subsequent development of doctrine in the Christian tradition. There is no separation between Scripture and tradition since Scripture is apostolic tradition (Chan, 2014:14)

This theology uniquely engages and embraces the local culture and the experiences of the community, while maintaining historic Christian orthodoxy despite its rudimentary roots. Paul H. Gundani (2007) observed this phenomenon among mourning Christian women of the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe, and found that the songs they sang were pregnant with theological themes and meaning. He was able to streamline the songs under categories such as a call to order; a fickle world; mourning the loss of one sheep; the need for God's presence; judgment; Jesus as the life and source of comfort; hope for beatific reunion; and appeals for God's mercy (Gundani, 2007:43-49). His reflection on these choruses yielded that,

'Through song and dance Shona Christian women have managed to create a relevant and contextual theology from the bottom, up' (Gundani, 2007:50).

How were these women able to achieve this? It was by identifying with the bereaved families in their hour of need, and through Christian diaconal presence that offered hope and courage in the midst of tragedy and despair. The gatherings and the songs they sang broke denominational barriers and fostered ecumenism and strengthened family ties. But the gatherings were subversive, in that they defied the denominational and political divisions enforced by higher authorities. More so they were in everyday vernacular, informal, lay-led, with no place for traditional male domination. Also, the songs were mostly choruses not drawn from official hymnals or approved liturgy. They

have effect on the mourners mainly because they were short, easy to memorise and repetitive. (Gundani, 2007:49-50).

From an Asian Christian perspective Simon Chan (2014:8) proposes 'how theology ought to be done', as against how it is currently being done by those he calls 'elite theologians' who impose their views on the Asian context and read it selectively. Thus, he thinks that 'what passes as Asian theology tends to be confined to a limited number of themes and theologians' (Chan, 2014:23). Commenting on Chan's perspective of a theology from below Jackson Wu (2014) posits that Chan argues from the perspective that 'theologizing is a community affair. Thus, Asian Theology should reflect the concerns of local cultures and the insights of the historical church' (Wu, 2014:613).

Similar concerns regarding the imposition of received theology, especially from the Northern hemisphere on churches of the South (namely, Africa, Asia, and South America) have been observed by other theologians, including Robert Schreiter (2015). He observed the emergence of many *new questions* from the newer centres of Christianity (in Africa, Asia and South America), which were unsatisfactorily answered with *old answers* by their established counterparts of the North (Schreiter, 2015:2-3). It was such a context of unsettling local issues in South America that inspired a theology of liberation championed by the Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez.⁴³

Schreiter (2015:3-6) noted further issues to include identity, globalisation, history, colonialism, paternalism from the North, and so on. These forced the search for newer answers to those new questions. Thus, he says, words such as contextualisation,

⁴³ Liberation theology was considered as an option for this research but dropped because despite some historical similarities of colonialism, military dictatorship, and so on, the African (or Nigerian) experience was still different culturally. The violence excused (if not embraced) in the expression of that theology could only exacerbate the situation in the Niger Delta.

inculturation, localisation, indigenization, and adaptation gained currency to open up opportunity for new theologies to emerge from local Christian communities. Inculturation which is the more popular term among Roman Catholic theologians, is described as ‘the process of incarnating the good news in a particular cultural context’ (Healey and Sybertz, 1996:26).

In other words, theology from below should be rooted within the community, holding together in balance germane local traditions on one hand and the rich treasures of Scripture and of the Church over the ages (Healey and Sybertz, 1996). Consequently such contextual theology should neither be a denial of Scripture nor of the rich traditions of the church, but one rooted in them and yet enriched by the experience of the contemporary Christian community (Bevans, 2002:3-7). Interestingly the Asian emphasis of community is akin to the African communitarian worldview by which the individual finds expression and solidarity with the group (Mbiti, 1969:108-109). There are idiomatic expressions in the Igbo language that emphasise the centrality of community or group solidarity. Prominent among them is ‘Oha-bu-ike’, literally meaning ‘the community or group is strength’.

It is noteworthy that African theologians have, especially since the latter half of the twentieth century (post-colonial era), increasingly sought to deconstruct and untangle African Christian theology from subservience to Western Christian traditions (Schreiter, 2015:1-4). These scholars boldly lay claim to the bible and the Christian faith and, by so doing, emphasise the compatibility of African culture and worldview with biblical traditions. These scholars, accordingly, celebrate the authenticity of African Christianity (Meiring, 2007:733). Notable among these scholars is John Mbiti (1998:142) who argues that:

'The Bible is very much an African book, in which African Christians and theologians see themselves and their people reflected and in which they find a personal place of dignity and acceptance before God.'

Therefore it was apt to choose *theology from below* as methodology. Moreover, the idea of being rooted in the community and yet firmly upholding the historic Christian (Reformed) traditions is the premise on which the faith and mission of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria (PCN) has been grounded. This is clearly denoted in the rule book of the PCN, the Practice and Procedures (Section G-02.0600), where the church claims its African authenticity despite its origin as a church-plant of a foreign mission board – the Church of Scotland Mission. Besides, the notion of theology from below gives expression to the views of ordinary Presbyterians, and helps to articulate them in a coherent theological fashion.

Members of the local congregations and their ministers as practitioners of different sorts, engaged in various fields of life, create knowledge in their 'doing'. They (as practitioners) 'often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action' says Schon (1994: viii). In that regard, it takes a keen observer to identify and draw out the themes and impulses embedded in their conversations and actions, which is what this research has done. The interviewees spoke passionately about their experiences during the height of the Niger Delta environmental crisis and the challenges they faced as Christians seeking to make sense of things. Theologically the range of themes that emerged encompassed the broad range of Christian theology – creation, the fall, redemption, and eschatology.

Schreither (2015:7-18) has identified three main models of constructing local theology, namely, translation, adaptation, and contextual. As a way of summary, the translation approach is commonly employed by bible translators, liturgists, and missionaries, to

convert received data into a new context. The adaptation approach favours the development of local ideas in parallel to their received Western equivalent. Lastly, the contextual approach on which this research is patterned. Robert Schreiter posits, that

Whereas the adaptation models continue to emphasize somewhat more the received faith, contextual models begin their reflection with the cultural context...embodying the ideals of what local theology is to be about (Schreiter, 2015:14)

The contextual approach is further subdivided into the ethnographic and liberation approaches. The former deals with cultural identity, while the latter concentrates on salvation from oppressive circumstances and social ills. Evidently, the Niger Delta context being researched encompasses ingredients of both models. The liberation theology model was considered as a pathway for this research, but it was discarded due to historical differences between black Africa and Latin America.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the violence embraced or, at least, excused by the South American liberation theology (Paredes, 2010:112) could only have exacerbated the already dire conflict situation in the Niger Delta if liberation theology was chosen. The church could have been dragged deeper into the crises, and not had the moral standing or goodwill to mediate between the warring sides. And given the differences in the socio-cultural and political context, it was safer not to adopt the liberation model. Notwithstanding, its pulses, in terms of the issues of corruption, violence, and the feeling of oppression and marginalisation that gave rise to it, are palpable throughout the thesis. This

⁴⁴ This was because despite some historical similarities, including the experience of European colonialism, military dictatorship, and other social ills, the Nigerian experience (being African) was still different culturally from those of South American nations. Marxist ideology played a significant role in governance and political discourse in the Latin America of that period (Tito Paredes, 2010:111-112), unlike in Nigerian where capitalism was favoured, even if with so much state interference.

warranted my developing of a hybrid contextual approach known as the local holistic theology approach.

Another vital question that must be answered is, who can write this local holistic theology? The answer is that it can be done by an individual and/or group effort (Laurie Green, 2009:6-9, 27-35; Schreiter, 2015:18-22). It could be done by 'Insiders' or 'Outsiders' immersed in the cultural context (Schreiter, 2015:22-23). It was for this concern that Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz wondered whether they were qualified, as foreign (American) Roman Catholic missionaries, to write an African narrative theology of the Sukuma people of Tanzania. They wrestled with multiple questions of validity, belongingness, legitimacy, ownership and authenticity (Healey and Sybertz, 1996:13-16). However, honesty, trust and immersion into the context helped them overcome these challenges.

In contrast to Healey and Sybertz (1996) my position approaching this research was as an insider. Being an indigene of one of the oil-producing states (Abia), meant that I did not have the same challenges as Healey and Sybertz. Moreover, I had previously worked in that context, as Chaplain at the University of Port Harcourt (1998-2001), with first-hand experience of the degradation and the attendant bio-physical, economic, and socio-political crisis.

Furthermore, I brought into the research my ontological and epistemological positions as a Nigerian Presbyterian of Igbo ethnicity, with evangelical views. But with the required level of detachment, neutrality, objectivity and fairness I was able to deal with any biases, preconceptions and prejudices as an insider (Holloway, 1997:108, 159-162; Mason, 2002:13-17; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:112-113). Nevertheless, the knowledge that I came from a research centre in Oxford did, in a sense, categorise me

as an outsider. Thus, some researchers such as Sonya Dwyer & Jennifer Buckle (2009:60-61) and Katie Kerstetter (2012:101) contend that there is no strict insider or outsider in research, rather, that, there is 'the space between'. Consequently, I see myself straddling those two world, bringing the benefit of both perspectives as an insider-outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009:60-61).

Notice also that in the earlier-mentioned case of the Zimbabwean women, it was Paul Gundani (2007), as an individual, who articulated and produced the theology from below, not the women. The women were, no doubt, involved in the 'doing' of the theology, and created it in the process of experiencing issues of life. In this case the women were creating something, without realizing what they were doing. However, their efforts needed a professional theologian (Gundani) to construct the bits and pieces into a coherent theology from below. This is what this research, and I (as the insider-researcher) have set out to accomplish.

1.8.1 Data Collection

To collect data from the field, a conversational or dialogic style of semi-structured interview was employed. This choice was a benefit of hindsight from the delicate security circumstances that surrounded the first fieldwork that was conducted at the height of the Niger Delta crisis in 2009. A second round of interviews were conducted with greater sensitivity in 2012 given the recent volatile history of the area. The benefit of the semi-structured interviewing is that it encourages participation of those involved. It also tends to 'humanize the interviewer and diminishes [his] power and control of the interview process' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:223). Even though the conversational style of interviewing might seem unserious and unconventional at times, Martin Woods (2011:1) insists that "the interview method is a conversation with

a purpose".⁴⁵ In other words research interviews are not aimless, they are designed with the clear intention to produce knowledge. However, in order to address the possible shortcoming of a perceived lack of seriousness the interview process had to be anchored on a semi-structured format to give it a core.

The quantitative data was obtained through surveys administered in 2009 and 2016. The survey was administered by myself with the aid of friends and ministerial colleagues. But due to the paucity of funds and time constraint the research assistant who supported the field efforts in 2012 helped to conduct the 2016 survey. One being an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria made it strategic and convenient to administer the instrument mainly to members of the church. This is particularly as the research is about the response of the PCN to the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta.

The questionnaire was structured in four parts, the introduction and the three core parts. They are namely, the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP), the Theology and Mission (TM), and the Bible Teaching (BT) segments. Originally the instruments had five optional responses, namely, A=Strongly Agreed; B=Agreed; C=Uncertain; D=Disagreed; E=Strongly Disagreed. But to make it easier for my target audience, some of who are of little or no formal education, the options were reduced to three, namely Agreed (A), Uncertain (U), and Disagreed (D). The raw data have been arranged in tables in Appendix One for presentational ease and percentages used for analysis.

⁴⁵ Woods, Martin (2011), Interviewing for research and analysing qualitative data: An overview. <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/pdf/interviewing-for-research-and-analysing-qualitative-data.pdf>. Accessed 24/07/2013

1.8.2 Sampling

The sample is a spread of geographic contexts, individual circumstances and a broad spectrum covering age, sex, and professionals and non-professionals from Presbyterian churches in and around the city of Port Harcourt.

Table 1.1 Showing the Spread of the interview Participants

Church & Member Identification	Respondent	Date Interviewed (by self)	Tribal Origin	Church	Presbytery	Context
A1	Elder Mrs Ade Ango (WG)	4 November, 2012	Igbo	Mary Slessor Memorial PCN	Port Harcourt	City Church
A2	Mr India Ume (MCA)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
A3	Sabo Panti (Youth)	7 November	Igbo	Do	do	do
B4	Mr Chike Job (Youth)	do	Igbo	Diobu	do	do
B5	Elder Mrs Ugochi Nnam (WG)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
B6	Miss Chiamaka Ukia (Youth)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
B7	Mr Henry Ogbo (MCA)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
C8	Marge Oba (WG)	27 November, 2012	Igbo	Rumuomasi	Port Harcourt North	do
C9	Elder Omo Omoba (MCA)	3 December, 2012	Igbo	Do	do	do
C10	Dr Chika Nkire (MCA)	27 November	Igbo	Do	do	do
C11	Annette Udom (Youth)	do	Ibibio	Do	do	do
C12	Mrs Uga Ogbo (WG)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
C13	Ere Oba (MCA)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
D14	Miss Nnem Wetalu (Youth)	29 Nov., 2012	Kalabari	Eleme	do	Semi urban
D15	Mrs Felicia Ogbo (WG)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
D16	Mr Ikere Orjiako (Youth)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
D17	Rev Dr Chim Wetalu (MCA)	do	Kalabari	Do	do	do
E18	Mr Festus Karl (MCA)	3 Dec., 2012	Igbo	Bori	do	do

E19	Mr Yelga Egba (MCA)	do	Ogoni	Do	do	do
E20	Mr Endurance Comfort (Youth)	do	Ogoni	Do	do	do
F21	Mrs Charity Ogan (WG)	3 December, 2012	Ogoni	Bodo	do	Rural
F22	Mr Vincent Zam (MCA)	do	Ogoni	Do	do	do
G23	Elder Mrs Chika Uka (WG)	25 November, 2012	Igbo	Woji	do	Urban
G24	Barrister Andrew Apple (MCA)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
G25	Engr. Chi Nedu (MCA)	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
G26	Barrister Edward Iniobong (MCA)	do	Ibibio	Do	do	do
G27	Rev Bona Ndikor	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
H28	Mr Ifendu Imogen (Youth)	do	Igbo	Oyigbo	Port Harcourt West	Semi-urban
H29	Mr Cyprian Onuma	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
H30	Mr Maxwell Alwell	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
H31	Miss Antoinette Anietie	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
H32	Rev Oscar Alaba	do	Igbo	Do	do	do
I33	Rev Kalu Ulu Eme	30 Nov., 2012	Igbo	General Assembly Office, Aba	General Assembly Office, Aba	Urban
I34	Rev Okechukwu Iro	do	Igbo	do	do	do
J35	Barrister S K Igbara	3 Dec., 2012	Ogoni	Nil	Nil	Nil
K36	Rev Dr Benebo Fubara Fubara-Manuel	25 Nov., 2012	Kalabari	Mary Slessor PCN	Port Harcourt	URBAN
K37	Rev Nnimmo Bassey	19 Nov., 2009	Efik	ERA/FoEN	do	do
K38	Rev Dr Paul O. Ajah	25 Nov., 2009	Igbo	AoG/PBC	do	do
K39	Prof Samson Akama	23 Nov., 2009	Isoko	UNIPORT	do	do
K40	Pastor George Izunwa	24 Nov., 2009	Igbo	PENTECOSTAL	do	do
K41	Prof Kimse Okoko	26 Nov., 2009	Ijaw	INC	do	do
K42	Prof EJ Alagoa	21 Nov., 2009	Ijaw	UNIPORT	do	do
K43	Archbishop Ignatius CO Kattey	23 Nov., 2009	Eleme	ANGLICAN BISHOP	do	do
K44	Che Ibegwura	19 Nov., 2009	Ogba/Egbema	ACTIVIST	Rural	do
K45	Pastor (Mrs) Uloma Sunny Cookey	02 Dec., 2009	Igbo	PENTECOSTAL	do	do
K46	Msgr. Cyprian Onwunli	16 Nov. 2009	Etche	Roman Catholic	Nil	City

Table 1.1 shows the distribution of the interview sample. Specifically seven congregations were chosen for sampling cutting across the three Port Harcourt presbyteries, namely Port Harcourt North (Rumuomasi, Eleme, Woji and Bodo City congregations), Port Harcourt West (Oyigbo Central congregation), and the main Port Harcourt (Mary Slessor and Diobu congregations) presbyteries. Three of the churches (Mary Slessor, Rumuomasi and Diobu churches) are within the urban centre of Port Harcourt; three (Oyigbo, Eleme and Bori churches) are semi-urban towns in the outskirts; and Bodo City (despite its pretentious name) is actually a small town that would best be described as a rural village.

The investigation began with a multi-stage sampling, which involved picking one's sample from a large sample (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995). This was necessary because of the vast and challenging terrain of the Niger Delta, coupled with the pressure of limited resources – manpower, time and money. At the time of the fieldwork in November 2012 there were three Presbyteries within Port Harcourt area: namely Port Harcourt Presbytery, Port Harcourt North Presbytery and Port Harcourt West Presbytery, covering Rivers and Bayelsa States. Care was taken to select at least one congregation from each of these presbyteries, even though they were all within Rivers State.

The fluid nature⁴⁶ of the field at the time of the visit warranted the use of the opportunity sampling method. This was because of reliance on respondents who were readily available at every given point. Opportunity was seized to request an interview

⁴⁶ 'Fluid nature' refers to the challenge of tracking down potential interviewees and the unpredictable security situation that defined some parts of the Niger Delta at that time. Also being an area that has been heavily researched the researcher observed that there seems to be some growing issues of respondent-fatigue, of trust and mistrust, and of confidence and confidentiality. People's occupational and professional engagements also affected their availability.

whenever possible. This simply means 'selecting people who are most easily available at the time of the study'.⁴⁷ This method is commonly known as convenience sampling. However, despite that it is now frequently used for social research, and works well in cases of serious constraints, its major shortcoming is that it runs the risk of being limiting in scope of application (Fink 1995:18, Bryman 2008:183). Another reason why opportunity sampling was the sensible and pragmatic choice was the constraint of time as the researcher is not resident in the country.

A good example of opportunity sampling was a chance meeting with Barrister S K Igbara when I went to interview members of the Bori congregation in Ogoni. After the interviews I was informed that the landowner where the church was built was the national legal adviser of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). This is the organisation that Ken Saro-Wiwa (the late playwright and leader of the Ogoni people) led to challenge the government on their policy on Ogoni. Barrister Igbara magnanimously agreed to an interview at short notice. His views as a key informant were valuable because of his three-fold insider-knowledge – of the Niger Delta as an indigene, of the laws of Nigeria as a lawyer, and of the political, economic and environmental issues as an activist.

In order to address some of the mentioned drawbacks associated with the opportunity or convenience sampling, which is that it is unrepresentative and atypical, efforts were made to ensure spread. Interviewees were chosen from the earlier mentioned predetermined categories (see Table 1). A mixed, multi-stage sampling was employed

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Source: http://fds.oup.com/www.oup.com/pdf/oxed/secondary/mfl/visual_companions_spreads/visual_companion_ch3_54-5.pdf. Accessed 16/07/2013

to accommodate all the samples from across those categories to make the result more representative and less constraining.

Being myself a Presbyterian accorded me a measure of trust that a total outsider would have found difficult to obtain. My previous ministry in the area afforded me the benefit of familiarity and confidence with the interviewees (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2001:29). However, in order not to betray this trust a high level of confidentiality was maintained throughout the interviewing process (Mason, 2002:201). The interviews were also handled personally by me and not a proxy.

The names of the respondents have been substituted with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, personal safety and data protection, bearing in mind the potential for reprisals in the region. However, being public figures with well-known opinions, the identity of prominent church and community leaders have been left unchanged. But all information that the respondents wanted to be off the record were treated as such.

In the end a total of forty six interviews were conducted – thirty three from the local PCN churches, two from the PCN General Assembly office, and eleven local non-Presbyterians. Care was taken to make sure that the interview schedules were as unobtrusive as can be and that, where possible, they coincided with activities in the church when the respondents were going to be available.⁴⁸ This guaranteed that it did not affect their personal work schedules. It is significant to observe that the

⁴⁸ The interviews were made easier by the effective use of my former colleagues (the local pastors and Church elders) as gatekeepers to guarantee access. They as key informants helped in the recruitment of subjects, some of them became subjects in the research as well. In another sense this effectively became what is known as a Volunteer Sampling method. In a number of cases the ministers even offered the use of their offices to provide privacy and confidentiality. This is notwithstanding that all of the respondents were happy to be interviewed in the open – a clear indication of the improved state of security in the Niger Delta of 2012, as against the pervasive fear in 2009.

respondents were very willing to volunteer their opinions at short notice. This seems to reveal that the people were probably waiting for an opportunity to tell their stories.

An important result of the data collection indicates how the respondents reflected the tribal and linguistic diversity of the PCN. However, it also showed that the majority of the members (at least from the congregations drawn) are from the Igbo tribe (See Table 1). The spread shows that out of the thirty two PCN interviewees three are from the Efik/Ibibio tribes of the Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, four are Ogoni, and three are Kalabari. The remaining twenty three are from the majority Igbo tribe drawn from Abia and Ebonyi States of the South East of Nigeria. This lopsided distribution could have been problematic if it did not fairly represent the demographics of the PCN membership in the area. Moreover, the data suggests that their opinion comparatively reflects the popular opinion of all Presbyterians who live in the area, irrespective of their tribal origin. The objectivity, validity and reliability of the data are further enhanced when certain ethnic tensions common in the Nigerian polity play out in the opinions of the respondents. These are clear intertribal biases that could not be engineered.

The pseudonyms used were subsequently augmented with identification numbers in order to give the respondents maximum protection and anonymity, where necessary. For ease of understanding the data has been arranged in seven columns⁴⁹ for respondents who have been grouped in rows according to their respective churches. For instance all the respondents with identification codes beginning with the alphabet

⁴⁹ While the first column shows the identification code for each respondent, the second lists the names of the respondents, the third shows the date when they were interviewed, and the fourth indicates their tribal origin. The fifth column bears the name of the congregation and the sixth indicates the Presbytery they belong to, while the seventh column specifies their geographic location. Thus Table 1 shows the sources of the primary data used in this chapter, and how they are collated, distributed and organised.

'A' represent three members from Mary Slessor Memorial Presbyterian Church (A1-A3). The same goes for the four members from Diobu (B4-B7), six from Rumuomasi (C8-C13), four from Eleme (D14-D17), three from Bori (E18-E20), two from Bodo City (F21-F22), five from Woji (G23-G27), and five from Oyigbo (H28-H32). Adding Rev Dr BF Fubara-Manuel (K36) who at that time was the minister at Mary Slessor PCN, and the two officials of the General Assembly office, brings it to thirty five Presbyterians. Adding the remaining eleven respondents from outside the PCN brings the total to forty six respondents (see Table 1.1). 'Q' stands for the quoted comments of respondents extracted from the interview transcript. The number following it is the relevant portions in each respondent's transcript.

After the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, the data that emerged were manually coded to highlight prominent and frequently occurring words and phrases using coloured highlighting pens. Red markings denoted the environmental problems and their causes. Yellow represents the positive actions of government, business and the public towards the environment. Green represents the positive response of the PCN and its congregations to the problems of the environment, while orange denotes their challenges and failures. These coded raw data extracted from the transcribed interviews were fed into a table to determine the frequency of their occurrence. As a result of this, some common themes and patterns emerged upon which the data is analysed.

The survey samples were drawn from churchgoers and their pastors across the city of Port Harcourt, reflecting a cross-denominational spread, based on the internal polity of

the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).⁵⁰ The stratified random sampling⁵¹ technique was used in order to get a representation across the CAN population in Port Harcourt, with demographics covering age, sex, church affiliation, and education.⁵² A total of two hundred and ten questionnaires (210) were distributed to ten churches, twenty one per church (one was for the pastor).⁵³ Of this number only ninety six (96) were returned completely filled. And in the 2016 surveys three hundred and thirty (330) questionnaires were distributed to eleven churches, and one hundred and ninety seven (197) returned (see *Table 1*).

One further difference between the two sets of results is that in 2016 the results reflected the views of more non-Presbyterians, compared to 2009. In 2009 there were ninety non-Presbyterians from nine churches, and only six Presbyterians from one congregation of the PCN. But in 2016 the focus was mainly to capture the views of members of the Presbyterian Church, consequently there were one hundred and sixty seven Presbyterians from eight congregations, as against thirty non-Presbyterians from three congregations.

⁵⁰ The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is the ecumenical cum political association of all Christian groups in Nigeria. It has within it the following groups: The Roman Catholic Church; the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), comprising the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Anglican Churches; the ECWA-SIM; the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria – a loose association of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches; and the Association of African Initiated Churches (AAIC), popularly known locally as the *Aladura*. However, I am aware that not all churches belong to CAN, but since at least about 80%-90% do, it was necessary for me to use it as the basis to draw my sample.

⁵¹ Kumar, Ranjit. "Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners." London: Sage Publications, 1999, 158-59. Even though I meant it to be a proportionate stratified sampling method, it turned out to be disproportionate.

⁵² One is aware that it could be disputed that this pastor's views were not really representative of the missing voices sought for, as he is from a denominational church background.

⁵³ There were 2 Roman Catholic churches, 2 Pentecostal church, 1 Presbyterian church, 1 Anglican Church, 1 Evangelical Church, 1 AAIC, and 2 interdenominational churches, following the earlier mentioned CAN arrangement. Meanwhile, it is important to remember that not all Churches in Nigeria belong to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

1.9 Limitation and Scope of the Research:

For the sake of proper management, the geographical scope of this research is restricted to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as suggested by its title. Because the region is very vast, covering nine states of the Nigerian federation, it was useful to further limit the area covered to one state, Rivers State. Also, following the spread of Presbyterian congregations, mostly within the urban centre of Port Harcourt, the samples were drawn primarily from their church members within that city. Others came from surrounding towns such as Oyigbo, Eleme, Bori, and Bodo City.

At the start of this research, the PCN was organised under nine regional synods and Port Harcourt and its environs were under the South Central Synod covering four states (Rivers, Bayelsa, Imo, and part of Abia State).⁵⁴ The Niger Delta Synod was created in the summer of 2015, joining the three presbyteries in Port Harcourt with two others from Edo and Delta States (from the Synod of the West). On paper this is a good configuration for the cause of the Niger Delta, as the areas covered by the new Synod (which includes the core Niger Delta states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Edo and Delta states) are the hotbed of the environmental crisis. It should become the chief mission concern of the new synod.

Due to the scope of this research, attention will be limited mostly to the operations of Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC), its affiliates and its contractors,

⁵⁴ The synods were the Synod of the West, the Synod of the North, East Synod, South Central Synod, East Central Synod, Mid-East Synod, Akwa Synod, Calabar Synod, and Upper Cross River Synod.

when discussing the activities of oil companies. This is because it is the biggest oil industry player in Nigeria, particularly within the context of this study.⁵⁵

1.10 Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline

The thesis is organised in eight chapters. **Chapter one** is a general introduction outlining the issues, and also the methodology and methods driving the thesis. The research context is clearly outlined, exploring the major issues.

Chapter Two explores the theological and biblical understanding of creation as basis for Christians' concern for the physical world. It is a theoretical chapter reviewing relevant literature which explores the nature of this theology of the environment. It argues that if the world belongs to God as the Christians claim, and if God gave humanity a cultural mandate, then there is justification for the involvement of the Church in caring for it. Drawing from various secondary sources the chapter attempts to answer the question, 'Are there theological and biblical bases for the church to be concerned about the environment?' It looks at themes such as creation, the fall, and redemption. It also explores the role of the church in the world and how that is an impetus for its response to whatever contemporary issues that faces it including the environment question.

Chapter Three contains a presentation of the problems that have rendered the Niger Delta environment unsustainable from published literature.

Chapters Four This is an account from fieldwork interviews of 2009 and 2012, relived by ordinary Presbyterians living in the area who experienced the most critical period of

⁵⁵ The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) claims that it is 'the pioneer and leader of the petroleum industry in Nigeria. It has the largest acreage in the country from which it produces some 39 per cent of the nation's oil.' Source: <http://www.shell.com.ng/about-us/what-we-do/spdc.html>.

the Niger Delta crisis. Their view is that the Niger Delta environment is in a parlous state, chiefly, but not exclusively from oil exploration activities. This is worsened by what the respondents perceive is a general state of negligence by these so-called stakeholders. Also, the actions taken by them (the stakeholders) to deal with the problems is analysed, looking at the merits and demerits. The views of these Presbyterians are compared and contrasted in some cases with those of non-Presbyterian for triangulation purposes. The chapter ends with a further comparison of these views with relevant secondary materials, which in this case double as primary sources, to locate the interviews within the context of prevailing scholarship on the Niger Delta crisis.

Chapter Five provides the actions taken by the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in response to the problems. Using primary data it analyses how PCN parishes in Port Harcourt and ordinary members at the grassroots have organised themselves to confront the environmental challenges there. This chapter also provides the biblical and theological views of members of the church. It assesses the modes of intervention, highlighting their high and low points, and suggesting what is missing, namely a systematic local holistic eco-theology which should undergird their action on the environment. This is explored in depth in chapter Seven.

Chapter six highlights some of the challenges that the PCN faces presently and possible pitfalls to the actualisation of its mission to care for God's creation.

Chapter Seven investigates the nature of a local holistic ecotheology from below, with which the church can launch its wider involvement on the issues of the environment. This theological framework anchored on Christian theology and a couple of cultural

themes, especially the *Ebe onye bi ka O na-awachi* and *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* African traditional principles of environmental responsibility.⁵⁶

And **chapter eight** concludes the thesis by recapping the essential arguments and points the way forward, with practical steps of how the PCN can action the provisions of the local holistic ecotheology.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has served to introduce the thesis, its contextual background and its flow. The chapter lays the foundation that prepares the main argument that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, as one of the earliest mission churches, has the pedigree to make a difference in the current Niger Delta environmental problems. With its mission antecedence that seeks the well-being of the total person, there is reason to believe that the PCN is well placed to play a major role in seeking the sustainability of the environment and its people despite the constraints it may have.

The next chapter will explore some of the resources available to it, especially the PCN's received theology cum doctrine of creation. In addition, it will examine the value of creation and its purpose, as well as humanity's role in it.

⁵⁶ *Ebe Onye bi ka O na-awachi* means, a person cares for, mends, or protects where they live (their surroundings or environment). And *Egbe bere Ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwapu ya* (in full), when translated means 'let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, whichever one prevents the other from perching, let his wings fall off'

CHAPTER TWO: TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF CREATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of relevant literature on an ecological theology of creation (eco-theology) with emphasis on sustainability. It gives a brief historical survey of the development of concern for God's creation in Christian thought and how that has been understood over time. Recent scholarship on the subject since the 2000s has also moved from passive apologetics towards a largely functional concern for creation. Berry (2000 and 2007), Northcott (2007), Deane-Drummond (2008), Hodson & Hodson (2008), White (2009), and R Bauckham (2010), to mention a few, do argue for an active Christian involvement in the care of creation. Celia Deane-Drummond stresses that

...it is important to highlight reasons why ecological practices are so important for eco-theology, for they serve to inform that theology, and in some senses are also an expression of it (Deane-Drummond, 2008:179)

She encourages her readers 'to engage in active reflection and positive action' (Deane-Drummond, 2008:xv). RJ Berry was even stronger in his own opinion, arguing that,

If environmental problems are as serious as the experts make out, Christians clearly have a need to focus their response as a matter of both survival and significant apologetics. But there is a deeper issue: if creation care is a divine mandate on all humankind, and if Christ's saving work really did involve reconciling to the Father 'all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Col. 1:20), then neglecting creation care is a sin and not merely an option in an overcrowded agenda (Berry, 2000:15)

Notably, when it comes to the idea of creation, bible writers are profuse, unapologetic, and indeed normative in their view that creation emanates from God (FF Bruce, 1985:160; West, 2006:22). But Christians of all ages have struggled with how to deal with nature – some have viewed it as evil to be abhorred, while others have seen it as God's good gift to be cherished and enjoyed. This chapter explores the meaning, value and the purpose of creation in the light of prevailing global ecological crisis, and seeks

to set the theological basis on which the body of Christ can consciously respond to these issues as a mission challenge.

The church, like any other segment of the society, lives within an environment. It interacts with and finds expression within this multi-layered context, and whatever affects this physical, social, and even economic environment does as well impact the Church's wellbeing and mission. This symbiotic relationship, as Jurgen Moltmann (1985:3) calls it, also means that the Church cannot be aloof or 'other worldly' to what happens to the world around it (Hodson & Hodson, 2008:13).

But how does the sense of ecology define relationships within the family of creation? What is the place of humanity within that larger story? What responsibility, if any, does this awareness place on humanity, and the Church in particular, over the rest of creation (Berry, 2000:15)? Is the bible clear on this? All of these questions will be responded to in this chapter. However, the point made by Berry (2000:15) about creation-care being a matter of 'significant apologetics' is core to this chapter. The reasoning here is that when the theology is right, the apologetics will be sound, and consequently the Church will find a solid foundation or framework for its praxis.

2.2 A Brief Historical Survey of Christian Engagement with Creation Care

Although it seems that discussion relating to Christian engagement with the environment is relatively new, it is not altogether so. The concern for the wellbeing of God's creation has always been in the church in one form or the other. It is not very clear where the Church missed it, but there is abundant evidence that the understanding about our responsibility for the care of God's creation, or at least the notion, is not novel to the Church. The belief in creation as God-given is, by itself, an

indication of the interaction between Christians and the world around them, and is a natural starting point to trace the involvement of Christians over the ages.

The interpretation of the creation stories of Genesis over the different ages of the church bear testimony also to the transition of thinking that held sway, particularly of the notion of human dominion of creation. From the Western church, St Francis of Assisi has been recognised as the Patron Saint of ecologists, by even the most vociferous critics¹ of Christianity's perceived negative role on the environment. Some argue that the efforts of St Benedict in conservation earns him the Patron Saint title (Attfield, 2006:83). His monks have been known to intervene in nature as farmers, builders and teachers (Dubos, 2006:57-58). The Eastern Orthodox tradition had its own contributions as well. Compared to the Western traditions, Nick Spencer and Robert White write that:

The attitude to the natural world of the early Greek Fathers such as Basil the Great and John Chrysostom was exemplified by the way they fostered positive attitudes to animals. Benedict, the sixth century founder of Western monasticism, propounded a similarly gentle attitude to nature and to animals within his Rule. Indeed the widespread development and influence of monasteries led to the domestication both of the land and of animals (notably of sheep, which transformed the pastoral landscape of Europe). Throughout the medieval period there was an understanding of the need to steward the Earth, particularly for successful long-term agricultural productivity (Spencer & White, 2007:76).

The reformation fathers were equally concerned about our relationship with God's creation. John Calvin admonished thus about the use of earth's resources:

Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence, but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated...let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things he possesses (Spencer & White, 2007:76)

The idea of handing down fields to posterity in the same or even better state than it was received is clearly a concept that is not dissimilar to the present concept of

¹ Interestingly it was in the closing argument of his controversial 1967 paper that Lyn White made this acknowledgement.

sustainability. Consequently, in so many ways the idea of sustainability has always been there in Christian thoughts and action, although the approach and emphasis might differ – from the patristic era to the medieval period, and into the Renaissance and the Reformation, from Origen to St Chrysostom, from St Columba to Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and so on. The emphases have ranged from an allegorical expression of Scripture to the abstract philosophical taming of the ‘beast within’ as an avenue for mastering the external world. And then it progressed to a literal approach, as early pointers to what we now know as stewardship (Spencer & White, 2007:76).

In modern times, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has made concerted efforts since the early 1970s to galvanise Christian views and action towards the global environmental crisis. David G Hallman (2001:126-128) writes that in 1974, long before idea of sustainability became popularised by the Brundtland Commission, the WCC had organised in Bucharest Romania, a consultation of theologians, scientists and economists to debate the issue. This was based on the Club of Rome’s *Limits to Growth* report which raised concern about how ‘natural-resource depletion, and population growth was placing an intolerable strain on the earth’s resources’ (Hallman, 2001:126).

The outcome of this WCC consultation was the emergence of the concept of sustainability, and the adoption of its ‘just, participatory, and sustainable societies’ (JPSS) initiative. This was expanded into the ‘justice, peace, and integrity of creation’ (JPIC) framework at the 1983 Vancouver Assembly, which formed the foundation for its far-reaching World Convention of 1990 in Seoul on the same theme. Coming from the position of an international NGO, the WCC has gone on to play a significant role in most national and UN consultations on the environment. Particularly, it has made its mark in critical Climate Change negotiations such as the build-up to the 1997 Kyoto

Convention. The WCC was instrumental to rousing Christian ecumenical partnerships in these directions by engaging the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Holy See (Hallman, 2001:128-9).

Major Christian denominations such as the Anglican (aka, Episcopal) Church and the Roman Catholic Church have also been actively involved in environmental action. The Anglican Church has developed what it calls the Five Marks of Mission, with the fifth focussing on the care of God's creation.² And after years of seeming reticence with occasional papal encyclicals, the Roman Catholic Church appears to have now thrown its weight behind the global environmental action. It is not surprising then that Pope Francis issued an encyclical on Climate Change on the 24th of May, 2015, urging united action to arrest the menace. With a tone of urgency he appealed for

a new dialogue...a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all' (Francis, 2015:12). [He therefore made a moral case for action, urging the] 'whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development' (Francis, 2015:12).

This statement challenges the notion that the church is only concerned with the saving of souls and preparing them for the afterlife and not concerned with the 'here and now'.

² The five marks of mission are five strands of mission developed by the Anglican Consultative Council between 1984 and 1990 to revitalise that Church. It became a rallying cry that seems to serve as a galvanising factor at the church's grassroots to engage with mission and church growth.

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

2.3 A Biblical Doctrine of Creation

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...’ (Genesis 1:1)

Judeo-Christian religious traditions portray the world (visible and invisible) as being the purposeful work of a rational Creator (God). In fact, the opening words of the bible state emphatically that ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ (Genesis 1:1, NIV). The traditional account of creation in Genesis 1 is that God created all things out of nothing (Latin, *ex nihilo*) by the word of his mouth. This gives the impression that there was no pre-existent matter with which God created the world. Bouma-Prediger emphasises that ‘though living beings procreate, none has the power God has to create *ex nihilo*’ (Bouma-Prediger, 2001:94). Bruce Milne (1982:72) throws more light on this by positing that, ‘While the actual phrase *out of nothing* does not appear [in the bible], the idea is clearly taught in the Bible (Gen. 1; John 1:3; Rom. 4:17; 1 Cor. 1:28; Heb. 11:3). It was particularly significant in the struggle of the early church against gnosticism, which regarded matter as evil, having its origin in some inferior deity’ (Milne, 1982:72).

An argument against the idea of creatio ex nihilo, according to Gerald West (2006:22), is that the opening phrase ‘In the beginning...’ does not necessarily mean an ‘absolute beginning’, but rather ‘the first of a series of creative acts’, which ‘implies that God [had] already created other things’. The idea being proposed here is that God did not create the heavens and the earth from nothing, but ‘out of pre-existing chaotic matter’ (West, 2006:22). Richard Baucham (2010:13) acknowledges what he terms ‘pre-creation’ which comprises the earth, waters and darkness – none of which was created in the six-day event, but were assumed as given. Does that mean that God had made other things before the Genesis accounts of creation in the first two chapters of

Genesis? Some scholars argue that ‘nothing’ in the phrase ‘creation out of nothing’ suggests an original negative which God had to overcome in the work of creation. But Bruce Milne (1982:73) counters this argument, opining that it does not find support in scripture.

Finally, to say that God created the world is to acknowledge the active involvement of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Gunton, 1997:142). Indeed the idea of God as Trinity is very much in the heart of the creation story.³ Bruce Milne captures it succinctly when he says:

Creation is that work of the triune God by which he called all things that exist, both material and spiritual, into existence out of nonexistence...It is noteworthy that each person of the Godhead is seen as active in creation: Father (1 Cor. 8:6); Son (Jn. 1:3); Spirit (Gn. 1:2; Is. 40: 12f.). Creation is, therefore, a divinely revealed truth and hence an article of faith (Heb. 11:3). (Milne, 1982:72)

The incarnation of the Son into His own creation had a far-reaching validating consequence on creation, as it refutes the dichotomy and dualism that held the spirit to be good and matter as evil and unreal.

The idea of God as Creator is pregnant with implications, prominent among these are:

Implication #1: God is the Author of all things

³ Christianity faced a lot of controversies in the first three centuries of its existence, ripples that continued until the split of the Church into its current Eastern and Western branch. Major divisions occurred in the process of finding a unified position on the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the understanding of God. This threw up a number of controversies, Arian’s controversy about the divinity of Christ (in comparison to the Father). This, led Emperor Constantine to summon the leaders of the Church in Nicaea in 325 AD to determine the subject. Arius and his followers held that ‘Jesus was just like the Father, but not equal to him in nature’ (Boff, 1988:66), resulting in the Nicene Creed that gave an elaborate description of the persons of the trinity and their relationship. The Church fathers decided, that:

‘first, faith in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is expressed; second, the relation between the Father and the Son is defined: they are one substance, expressed in the key word *homoousios*, meaning of one and the same *ousia* (essence or substance), the word that...came to be accepted as expressing what unites in the Trinity; third, the word hypostasis is used as synonymous with *ousia* or substance, as it had been up till Nicaea - later, under the influence of Origen and the Cappadocians, coming to be synonymous with *prosopon*, “person,” to designate what differentiates in God. Finally, the Holy Spirit is mentioned without any objective description, which was arrived at between Nicaea and Constantinople. But the Spirit was hereby incorporated into the common Creed of the whole church’ (Boff, 1988:66-67)

Whatever the arguments about creation, '[T]he whole narrative is an expression of the supreme truth that God is the author of the universe' (Eiselen, Lewis, and Downey, 1929:220). By authoring it means He is the originator, designer, and maker of all things by His wisdom. Despite theological differences most Christian religious traditions (protestant, catholic, and orthodox) are in agreement that the world is God's creation (Moltmann, 1985: xiii). It was created by an intelligent, personal, and passionate God. The bible particularly teaches that the Creator God personally initiated, supervised and birthed the things that are; both visible and invisible (Gen. 1&2; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 90:2; 102:25f; Jer. 10:12f; John 1:3; Rom. 1:25; Col. 1:15-17; Rev. 4:11). It is noteworthy that some stories from non-Christian cultures, including primal faiths, are close in agreement with this Genesis account of creation, even though the details may vary (Van Wolde, 1996:188-239; Page, n.d.:49-50).

From a reformed and Presbyterian point of view John Calvin views creation as 'the work of God', saying: 'remember to which side soever we turn, that all which meets the eye is the work of God, and at the same time to meditate with pious care on the end which God had in view in creating it' (Calvin, 2008:101). The implication is that the natural world is an intentional creation of a purposeful God, not a random occurrence, or an afterthought. Moreover in his commentary on Psalm 104:4, Calvin asserts that 'the winds do not blow by chance, nor the lightnings flash by a fortuitous impulse, but that God, in the exercise of his sovereign power, rules and controls all the agitations and disturbances of the atmosphere' (Calvin, 2003:146). Ultimately Calvin believes that creation's intention is to 'show forth the glory of the Author' (Calvin, 2008:24)

Claus Westermann has observed that until recent centuries, especially after the Enlightenment, the general understanding was that Gen. 1 and 2 were one and the

same document, the latter reinforcing and shedding more light on the former. But he believes that historical-critical examination of the Old Testament suggests that:

the two accounts Gen. 1.1-2.4a and 2.4b-24 (together with ch. 3) belong to two different sources, the latter to the older source, J, (Yahwist, tenth-ninth centuries B.C.) and the former to the later source, P, (Priestly Code, sixth-fifth centuries B.C.). This was the first step in scholarly inquiry into the reflection on Creator-Creation in the Old Testament (Westermann, 1971:5, 6).

According to Westermann the difference in the literary traditions explains why different generations of Jews interpreted and explained the creation account the way it made sense to them.⁴ The Hebrew word used for God's creative act in Genesis is *bara*,

In the tradition of the Priestly writing the verb *bara*...means a bringing forth in the sphere of history, nature and spirit, through which something comes into existence which was not there previously (Exod. 34.10; Num. 16.30; Ps. 51.10; and frequently). *Bara* is never used with the accusative of a material out of which something is to be made. This shows that the divine creativity has no conditions or premises. Creation is something absolutely new. It is neither actually, nor potentially inherent or present in anything else (Moltmann, 1985:73)

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words argues strongly that the verb *bara*:

is of profound theological significance, since it has only God as its subject. Only God can "create" in the sense implied by *bara'*. The verb expresses creation out of nothing, an idea seen clearly in passages having to do with creation on a cosmic scale: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1; cf. Gen. 2:3; Isa. 40:26; 42:5). All other verbs for "creating" allow a much broader range meaning; they have both divine and human subjects, and are used in contexts where bringing something or someone into existence is not the issue.

Bara' is frequently found in parallel to these other verbs, such as *'āsāh*, "to make" (Isa. 41:20; 43:7; 45:7, 12; Amos 4:13), *yāšar*, "to form" (Isa. 43:1, 7; 45:7; Amos 4:13), and *kun* "to establish." A verse that illustrates all of these words together is Isa. 45:18: "For thus saith the Lord that created [*bara'*] the heavens; God himself that formed [*yāšar*] the earth and made [*'āsāh*] it; he hath established [*kun*] it, he created [*bara'*] it not in vain, he formed [*yāšar*] it to be inhabited: I am the Lord: and there is none else" (Vine, *et al*, 1996:51).

⁴ The implication of this in our scientific age is that we must not continue to act as if science and religion are two irreconcilable foes, but seek ways to make sense of what we believe about the subject.

Despite the ubiquity of the word *bara'* in the second paragraph of the preceding quotes, 'The technical meaning of *bara'* (to "create out of nothing") may not hold in these passages'; Vine thinks 'perhaps the verb was popularized in these instances for the sake of providing a poetic synonym' (Vine, 1996:51). However, it must not be lost that the idea of *bara'* in the sense it is used in describing creation in scripture is exclusive to God alone (Eiselen, Lewis, and Downey, 1929:220; Vine, *et al*, 1996:51; Moltmann 1985:73).

Implication #2: God is the Owner of all things

Another cardinal implication of the notion of God creating the world is that He is the owner as well. The emphatic statement in Psalm 24 that, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' is an indication of the same default position of the Judeo-Christian tradition in Genesis. 'On this one verse [that is, Psalm 24:1],' Seaton (1992:38) says, 'all human pretensions to supremacy are shattered.' God Himself declares in Lev.25:23 that 'The land is mine', including its produce (Hos. 2:10-11).

Commenting on Psalm 24:1-2 Derek Kidner (2008:131) says the implication of declaring God's ownership of the earth is that it 'conjures up its wealth and fertility seen here not as man's, for his satisfaction, but prior to that, as God's for his satisfaction and glory'. This claim is not just about the earth alone, it also includes 'the world, and all who live in it' (vs 1b). The word employed for *world* here is *cosmos*, which represents the earth (alongside other planetary systems), plant and animal species that live in it, including people and their systems of life, whether political, social, economic, and so on.

Implication #3: God is different from Creation and not contingent upon it

The biblical view of God's relationship with His creation is that of His immanence in creation and His transcendence over it. We see in Rom 1:18-25 that even though creation bears the stamp and revelation of God, yet God is different from His creation and cannot be equated with it (Fritsch, 1960:19). God is constantly interacting with his creation in a sustaining relationship. This view is supported by Loren Wilkinson (1980:205) who argues that 'there is one thing about biblical religion which is abundantly clear, it is that God is the maker of the world, and thus he is completely apart from it. He does not depend on it, but it depends utterly and completely on him.'

Jurgen Moltmann stresses this idea when he proposes that:

To say that God 'created' the world indicates God's self-distinction from that world...This means that the world is not in itself divine; nor is it an emanation from God's eternal being. It is the specific outcome of his decision of will. Since they are the result of God's creative activity, heaven and earth are neither divine nor demonic, neither eternal like God himself, nor meaningless and futile. They are contingent. They are his goodly work in which he has pleasure – no more than that, but no less than that either. They take their reality from their affirmation of their Creator" (Moltmann, 1985:72-73).

The 'advantage of a Trinitarian approach to the theology of creation is that it enables us to say a number of important things, chief among them that the world is 'good', a distinct reality with its own being, and yet only so by virtue of its dependence upon and directedness to God' (Gunton, 1997:142).⁵ This dependence on God did not end with God's initial act of creation, it continues in the form of God's sustenance of his creation.

⁵ The biblical Christian understanding of creation challenges pantheistic ideas that God is everything and everything is God. The Christian view is that although everything was made by God, yet God is distinct from His creation and does stand apart from it. Our appreciation of creation therefore should be from the perspective of gratitude and worship to the benevolent giver (God) and not ascribe to creation any divine attribute amidst the call to restore the sense of awe in creation.

Implication #4 God is Sovereign over creation

To be sovereign means to bear rule and have dominion over a domain. God's dominion as the Maker and Ruler of all things is boundless and timeless, over all worlds, over realms that are visible and invisible (Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 4:34; Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 11:15). The implication according to CT Fritsch (1960:19) is that creation 'is the free, spontaneous act of a wise and sovereign God'. He rules over all creation and human kingdoms and He does what pleases Him (2 Chron. 20:6; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; Ps. 59:13; Psalms 8; 24:1; 99).

Implication #5 God is the Sustainer of His creation

The biblical view of creation is that of an unbroken chain, of God as creator and his continuous 'sustenance and renewal of the world. This is expressed in the idea of upholding, (Heb. 1:13 *pherōn*, lit. 'carrying along'; Col. 1:17, *sunesteken*, lit. 'stand together' or 'cohere'; cf. Acts 17:25)' (Milne, 1982:73). Bruce Milne argues further that:

If God were to withdraw his upholding Word, then all being, spiritual and material, would instantly tumble back into nothing and cease to exist. The continuation of the universe from one moment to the next is therefore as great a miracle and as fully the work of God as is its coming into being at the beginning. In this profound sense we all live every instant only by the grace of God (Milne, 1982:74).

Psalm 104 in the same breath hold together both ideas of creation and the sustainability of the same by God's Spirit. It says God feeds His creation at their proper time and satisfies them with goodness. His radiant face or favour means life, and significantly God renews the face of the earth by His Spirit (Psalm 104:27-30, NIV). It is interesting how the creative and sustaining role of the Holy Spirit in Psalm 104:30 mirrors the same idea in Genesis 1:2 about the role of God's Spirit bringing order into the chaos of creation. The Spirit of God was depicted as brooding over the face of the

deep and forming new life from the dark and formless void in the same sense as birds incubate and hatch their eggs.⁶

McGrath (2000: 86-87) has fittingly summarised the biblical insights about creation in the following four notions, that:

1. The natural order, including humanity, is the result of God's act of creation, and is affirmed to be God's possession.
2. Humanity is distinguished from the rest of creation in terms of being created in the 'image of God'.
3. Humanity is charged with the tending of creation (as Adam was entrusted with the care of Eden), in the full knowledge that this creation is the cherished possession of God.
4. There is thus no theological ground for asserting that humanity has the right to do what it pleases with the natural order. The creation is God's, and has been entrusted to humanity, who is to act as its steward, not its exploiter

The third and fourth statements are a reminder that human beings are beneficiaries of God's good creation, and certainly not its owners. It is a fact that calls for gratitude, care and responsible use of the same as able stewards of what God has bequeathed to us. The owner will someday require of humanity to account for how we have used his world.

2.4 The Value and Purpose of Creation

George Stuart Hendry (1980:11) raises a fundamental question about the place, meaning, and purpose of the natural world in God's overall plan for creation and redemption. In other words, does nature matter, or is it just accidental to His grand plan? Why should Christians 'waste resources' to pursue an environmental agenda

⁶ Arthur Peake however warns that '[t]he term "spirit of God" is not to be interpreted through later theological usage and identified with the Holy Spirit' (Peake, 1920:136). Notwithstanding such slant on the interpretation many traditional commentators have identified this figure as the one and the same Holy Spirit.

when there are more important things to do, such as saving souls and preparing them for heaven (Osborn, 1993:27)? Why should the PCN not spend its scarce resources in what is generally viewed as its primary calling, that is, the winning of souls and to prepare them for their onward pilgrimage to heaven.

The primary reason why creation is good is because it is, first, good in God's eyes. George Hendry posits that, 'when the Bible says that God looked on his creation at various stages in its progress and saw that it was good, this is said without reference to man. It was good for God' (Hendry, 1980:17). Therefore, 'God's approbation and appreciation of every part of his creation...indicates that each part of creation has its own value that does not depend on its value for other parts' (Hendry, 1980:17). This is akin to Paul's treatise on the usefulness of parts of the body – the head, nose, eyes, hands, feet, even our stomach – they all have their respective functions, none more important than the other (1 Cor. 12:12-31). They function best when they run as an integrated and interdependent whole. The implication is that all of God's creation was made to give satisfaction and pleasure to God (Revelation 4:11), and not to human beings who are only beneficiaries of God's goodness as caretakers (Beazley, 2009:22).

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda expounds further on God's declaration 'it was good' (in Hebrew *tov*, English good), to say that:

Fundamental to Christian faith is the claim that creation is "good," *tov* (Genesis 1). The Hebrew *tov*, while often translated as "good," also implies "life-furthering." Indeed as recent scientific inquiry probes ever further into the mystery of life, it confirms more fully the awe-inspiring, mind-boggling, unfathomably fecund nature of this planet. Its essential quality seems to be its life-furthering capacity (Moe-Lobeda, 2013:55)

Human beings belong with the rest of creation, in creative solidarity. Just as humanity (created in God's image and likeness) is valued and special, so, too, the rest of creation is valued and special in the sight of God. The question then is whether creation serves

any purpose or value. The list is probably endless, but suffice it to consider just four of them. They are the aesthetic, utilitarian, recreational, and sacramental values.

2.4.1 The Aesthetic Value of Creation

Our first knowledge of the world is through our senses, of what we see, touch, smell, taste and hear. Therefore, the aesthetic value of creation is the one that is too obviously ~~one~~ we experienced daily – the contours of the landscape around us, the beautiful patterns on flora and fauna, the changing seasons, and so on. The earth teems with life and beauty with every sight and sound. Jesus acknowledged in His sermon on the mount that God created and sustains his creation, and that even Solomon was not arrayed as one of those beautifully patterned flowers (Matt. 6:25-34). It is such experiences of the world that draws a sense of awe in appreciative souls, and elicits worship, and inspires the art and sciences.

2.4.2 The Utilitarian Value of Creation

The commonest value that creation serves is to meet human needs. Thus, humanity has grown to see the earth and its products primarily as a stock of goods to be exploited and enjoyed. From Genesis 1:28-30 we read that God gave mankind dominion over the rest of creation (a concept to be discussed latter). And for food He gave them the fruits of the earth for their enjoyment. These resources have sometimes been exploited in ways that suggest recklessness. Examples such as open cast mining that shaves off vast areas of arable top soil to reach embedded minerals abound. In the Niger Delta the exploitation of oil and gas has caused massive pollution to the

environment. There (in the Niger Delta) the chemical benzene⁷ in drinking water was found to be nine hundred times the WHO accepted standard (UNEP, 2011:13).

2.4.3 The Recreational Value of Creation

Creation provides the arena for rest and recreation in the form of different sports and activities. Beyond that, the concept of recreation is rooted in the biblical provision of the Sabbath, when God rested on the seventh day after finishing the work of creation on the sixth. For some Christians the idea of Sabbath is an Old Testament Jewish rite, especially as it is enshrined among the Ten Commandments given to Israel. However, they forget that the Sabbath actually predates the commandments. It is at the very beginning of creation and God enjoined all creation to observe a day of rest, and to sanctify it (that is, set it apart) for Him. Jurgen Moltmann (1985:277) contends that creation and Sabbath belong together, one cannot be divorced from the other; and that 'it is only the Sabbath completes and crowns creation' (Moltmann, 1985:6).

The Sabbath is not just a period of rest from activity, or a sign of inactivity. 'A Sabbath without honouring God is a lie', CT Fritsch (1960:26) argues. It is a call to a different kind of activity, of worship and of fellowship within the community of creation. God himself 'blessed', 'hallowed', 'set apart' the seventh day from every regular work, for the purpose of having fellowship with his creation. The psalmist sees the whole of creation (animate and inanimate – the sun, the moon, the stars, and so on) participating with humanity in this act of exaltation and exultation (Psalm 19; 150:6).

⁷ WHO's 2010 guidelines indicate that: 'Benzene is a well-established cause of cancer in humans. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified benzene as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1). Benzene causes acute myeloid leukaemia (acute non-lymphocytic leukaemia), and there is limited evidence that benzene may also cause acute and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple myeloma. Individuals who have experienced benzene poisoning requiring treatment show a substantially increased risk of mortality from leukaemia. • Chronic exposure to benzene can reduce the production of both red and white blood cells from bone marrow in humans, resulting in aplastic anaemia.' <http://www.who.int/ipcs/features/benzene.pdf>. Accessed 10/06/16.

The Sabbath is a foretaste of the endless fellowship believers will have with God in eternity, an imagery captured by John in the book of Revelation. Therefore, the earth provides a suitable arena for humanity to have fellowship with God and the rest of creation.

2.4.4 The sacramental Value of Creation

In the light of the institution of Sabbath, creation serves the sacramental purpose of witnessing to the invisible God and thus has the ultimate doxological value of glorifying Him. In other words, creation is the arena of God's self-revelation, and through which humankind is drawn to encounter Him. Creation as God's first book of revelation before the written word, for 'what may be known about God is plain...[and] have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made, so that men are without excuse' (Romans 1:19, 20). In the Psalms, nature (both animate and inanimate) glorifies God, gushing out in praise (Psalms 19:1f; 145:10, 21). The psalmist in awe of the vastness and greatness of God's creation wonders why God crowned mankind with glory and honour, and made them rulers over the rest of creation (Psalm 8:4-6).

It is useful at this point to emphasise with Larry Rasmussen (2006:181) that,

Nature and the world are not in themselves divine and are not to be worshipped...Sacraments themselves are symbols and signs that participate in the very Reality to which they point, but they are not themselves worshipped. To identify something earthly as holy and sacred is not to say it is God. Rather, it is of God; God is present in its presence.

But in Jesus Christ we find a critical unity of the immanence and transcendence of God, He being both son of man (Adam, or earth) and Son of God combined. It is 'an *anakephalaiosis*, a summing up of all in the Person of Christ' (Zizioulas, 2006:274). 'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form' (Col. 1:19; 2:9, NIV). Jesus revealed God to humanity, so that our attention will turn from the worship of creation to the worship of God, the Creator. In the Holy Communion He presented the bread and the wine as symbols that point to Himself and His eternal sacrifice (of His body and blood) that purchased salvation for all. Thus, creation (the fruit of the earth) plays a sacramental role, pointing us to the Creator.

2.5 Dominion or Stewardship?

One of the tensions in considering a theology of creation is the place of mankind in relation to the rest of creation, especially the notion that human beings have responsibility towards the sustainability of creation. The debate stems from the understanding of the idea of dominion that God gave humanity over creation, particularly in Genesis 1:28 and 2:15. Scholars have considered its implication in the face of the present global environmental criticality. This debate is vital for Christians because the so-called dominion mandate has consequently generated criticism against Christianity as the root cause of the prevailing environmental crisis (White, 1967).

Some commentators have argued that the misunderstanding, misuse, and misapplication of that injunction laid the foundation for an arbitrary, despotic use of God's creation. But this probably is because of the perception that *dominion* is the same as *domination*. Remarkably this seems to have been the dominant 'traditional' view which held sway until recently. But contemporary scholarship has faulted this because although the two ideas are close in meaning, they are actually different. The position is thought by RJ Berry (2006) to stem from Greek derived understanding of nature which was imposed on the biblical text. It furthermore projects an anthropocentric view of reality. However he believes that a proper understanding should yield that:

The vertical relationship suggested by 'dominion' was complemented by a horizontal relationship in which humans related to other creatures because all are creatures of one Creator. Dominion in the early Christian centuries was predominantly concerned with a mutual sharing of creation and not a legitimization of despotism (Berry, 2006:6).

In other words God's original intention in making human beings in His own image and likeness was not to create tyrants and despots, but responsible relational beings who will be as benevolent and graceful towards the rest of creation as God is. The

command given to man to 'rule' over the rest of creation was that of a caretaker's role when God handed him the reins. He was expected to do this with every sense of responsibility as one who is ultimately accountable to the owner (Isaiah 5:1-7, Matt. 21:33-46, 24:45-47, Rev 22:12). Hodson & Hodson (2008:29) explained this further when they said,

The original command [to human beings to exercise dominion] meant something very different. The term 'dominion' (*radah*) means to 'rule over' and is used in the Old Testament to describe the benevolent rule of the good Israelite kings over their subjects. The term 'subdue' (*kabash*) is related to working the soil and is a command to interact with nature and aid its fruitfulness.

The knowledge of this should challenge humanity to change the prevailing culture which resembles despotism, and embrace a new frame founded on mutuality with creation, with care and compassion over creation. This will engender the spirit of accountability, solidarity and true community.

Also, contrary to the erroneous unified reading of the first two chapters of Genesis, Theodore Hiebert emphasises that they are from two different viewpoints – the Priestly (P) and the Yahwist agrarian (J) traditions respectively. While the earlier emphasises dominion, the latter which 'has been eclipsed by, or subsumed under, the priestly image' (Hessel & Ruether 2000:145), stresses *abad*, an idea of servanthood (to work, till or serve the earth). Thus, Hiebert suggests the need to recover the essence of that second account in order to present a complete picture. A former US Vice President, Al Gore, is said to have represented this view when he admonished that 'followers of this [Judeo-Christian] tradition are charged with the duty of stewardship, because the same biblical passage that grants them "dominion" also requires them to "care for" the earth even as they "work" it' (Hessel & Ruether 2000:145).

The biblical view of creation as belonging to God makes the view of mankind as an absolute monarch, with authority to change and alter whatever they deem fit or unfit in creation, an unsound premise to build on (Gen 1&2, Psalm 24, 89:11, John 1:1f). Psalm 24:1-2 states unequivocally that God is the owner of everything in the world, including human beings themselves. So, human beings cannot claim ownership of creation, or behave as if they were the Lord (Preuss, 1995:114-117). In fact, Rev. 4:11 tells us God created all things for His own pleasure, not for the pleasure of human beings who actually will be accountable to God for how they used His gifts. Alister McGrath (2000:87) argues further that, 'There is thus no theological ground for asserting that humanity has the right to do what it pleases with the natural order. The creation is God's, and has been entrusted to humanity, who is to act as its steward, not its exploiter'.

The view of God as the creator and owner of all things 'is a powerful affirmation of the sovereignty of God, the identity of man, and the relationship between humanity and God' (Keck, 1996:772). Psalm 24 places everything in right perspective, that man's right to creation is only limited to the extent that God bequeathed His world to mankind as caretakers or stewards. Indeed, Patten describes stewardship as the 'central, ethical principle, which underlies our whole concern for the environment' (Patten, 2006:199). In this sense human beings are God's vice-regents, ruling on his behalf (Spencer and White 2007: 85).

The place of humanity is critical in determining what kind of stewardship entails for them. The view in scriptures of humanity is that of transient beings (strangers and pilgrims) is commonly expressed (Gen 47:9, Heb 11:13, 1 Pet 2:11). In strict terms they are tenants, and God is the real owner of this world. Another difference that needs to

be made is that, 'We [humanity] are not so much *vice-regents* for God (acting in his place) as *vice-gerents* (acting with delegated authority)' (Berry, 2006:7).⁸

Although Hodson & Hodson (2008) and Berry (2006) agree on the notion of God's authority given to humanity to rule over the rest of creation (in terms of stewardship), their approaches differ. While the Hodsons hold to the default meaning of stewardship as responsibility over another's property (in this case God's); for Berry (2006:1), 'Relationship is at the root of stewardship'. He explains that God being a relational God has created man in that same respect, not to be isolated from the rest of creation but to interact with them in a mutually beneficial way. He points out that the 'vertical relationship to creation suggested by 'dominion' was complemented by a horizontal relationship of mutual benefit in which humans related to other creatures because all are creatures of one Creator' (Berry, 2006:6).

On her part Ruth Page does see stewardship of creation in terms of fellowship. In her view, 'Unless we are convinced of the intrinsic value of other species and have caught a vision of the earth as a fellowship of creation, we are less likely to be tenacious in advancing the interests of creatures who cannot speak for themselves' (Page, 2006:104). However, she opines that 'Humanity has the unenviable task of having on occasion to choose among members of the fellowship what will flourish and what will not, for all creations cannot flourish equally' (*ibid*:104). But such pick and choose interference does feed into the disruption and destruction of ecosystems which in turn have contributed to the extinction of species in the world. Such behaviour does give

⁸ Being vice-gerents instead of vice-regents is that God did not abdicate his throne over creation to man. Humanity is only acting in trusteeship.

human beings the false impression of being in charge of things instead of being in solidarity with the rest of creation.

2.6 Criticisms against Stewardship

The problems with the above views on stewardship (of responsibility, relationship and fellowship) are that they assume that all humanity adopts a uniform ethical principle. But the reality is far from that, which makes it hard to implement. Indeed, John Zizioulas (2006:273-274) raises a further problem about a reductionist mentality that tends to reduce the environmental discourse in the West to an ethical problem. He contends that although ethics is important it cannot be legislated or forced into being. He therefore offers that the solution is a radical cultural change. For Christians he believes the liturgy is a starting point. Troy Messenger believes such transformation through liturgical engagement demands a rethinking and revisioning of our received other-worldly traditions, for an earth-centred theology (Messenger, 2001:174).

Others, like Clare Palmer (2006), however, think that the concept of stewardship has been overused and in fact been misused in both religious and secular settings, as such it has lost its meaning and intended potency. Thus, it has become another buzz word. She also contends that there is no such concept as the stewardship of nature in the Bible. And that even though the idea may not be totally lacking, yet there is no unity among the writers of Scripture on one central theme for this concept. Also she thinks stewardship reinforces the idea of God as an absentee landlord, and creates an oppressive hierarchical system. It promotes the commoditization of nature as having no intrinsic value in itself except to serve the purpose of the rich man (God) and his steward (man).

The idea of mankind been given the responsibility to take care of creation has a few more problems. Firstly, according to Richard Bauckham (2010:2), the notion that stewardship is all about humanity's hubristic tendencies that ascribes to itself corrective powers that rightly belong to natural systems. The argument is that whatever changes happening to the planet, whether global warming or climate change, are natural system alterations that will naturally correct themselves over time. Therefore, it will be arrogant for humanity to ascribe to itself the powers to effect any changes (Bauckham, 2010:2-12). A critique of this view is that it tends to discountenance, or at least downplay, the impact of human action such as greenhouse gas (GHG) emission on the planet. Such notions of system correction by natural means resonates with James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis which presences the earth's systems in the form of an intricately connected organism which regulates and corrects itself (Lovelock, 2006:107). David Bookless (2007:41), however, highlights that sustainability is neither entirely dependent on human beings nor on earth's natural systems, but rather on God who is both Creator and Sustainer.

The second criticism that Bauckham (2010:7-8) highlights is the idea that stewardship diminishes the place of God and excludes his activity in creation. Thus, the arrogance of humanity has led it to continually change creation in ways that has made nature hostile to its inhabitants. Consequently humanity seems to believe that we can get what we want, how we want it and at our own terms. The trust we appear to place on our technological advancement has meant that science and technology have in some sense become deified to the point that we believe we do not need the divine. The trouble is that more technological advancement increases humanity's ability 'to harm in an ever-growing scale' (Jones, 2003:3). Richard Bauckham admonishes that,

'Humans should care for creation within the context of God's caring for it, not in place of God's caring for creation (2010:8). In that sense we (humanity) will not approach stewardship from the perspective of superiority (or domination) but of servanthood – to God, and to the rest of creation we are called to serve (tend) – as priests of creation (Zizioulas, 2006:273-290).

The third criticism is that stewardship lacks specific content due to incongruences among its proponents. Some want to save creation from free-fall, others want humanity to hands-off creation so that it can recover from the centuries of despoliation (Bauckham, 2010:8-10).⁹ On the latter premise Friends of the Earth in Nigeria (FoEN), with its local partner – the Environmental Rights Action (ERA), has advocated for fossil fuel extraction to be halted in Nigeria through their 'Leave the Oil in the Soil' campaign.¹⁰ The group's former President in a poem entitled *I Will Not Dance To Your Beat* wrote:

If you don't leave crude oil in the soil
Coal in the hole and tar sands in the land
I will confront and denounce you.¹¹

Chris Patten contrarily believes 'The trick for humankind is to get the management of nature right, not to avoid it altogether' (Patten, 2006:202). The solution he thinks lies with the application of 'sound science' and 'sound economics' in a sustainable manner.

The fourth criticism against stewardship is that the ecological hierarchy sets humanity above the rest of creation and not within it. God is at the apex of that hierarchy,

⁹ A vivid example is the campaign of the Ogoni people for survival. They asked the multinational oil giant Shell to get out of their land. Actually the first visible result when that happened was that there was reduced tension in the area, and then the land had some rest from the effect of heavy mining equipment.

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article4009>. Accessed 13/03/2016

¹¹ Source: <http://oilsandstruth.org/i-will-not-dance-your-beat-poem-nnimmo-bassey>. Accessed 13/03/2016.

followed by humanity and then the non-human creation – a relationship where those at the bottom are passive recipients of grace from above and not of reciprocal interdependence. Bauckham (2010:11) charges that ‘Modern western people, beginning with the Renaissance, forgot their own creatureliness, their embeddedness within creation, their interdependence with other creatures...and conceived themselves as functionally gods in relation to nature’. He therefore sees such vertical hierarchy as ‘one of the ideological driving forces of the modern technological project of dominating nature’ (Bauckham, 2010:11).

The fifth criticism advanced by Richard Bauckham (2010:12) is that the notion of stewardship seem to be based mostly on the Genesis account of creation and God’s mandate to mankind to have dominion and to tend the earth. He advocates the need to ‘place the Genesis concept of dominion within its wider biblical context’ (Bauckham, 2010:12). In *Jesus and the Earth* James Jones (a retired Anglican Bishop) sets out New Testament thoughts on the environment based on the life and work of Jesus Christ. Of particular interest to him is Jesus’ self-description in the Gospels as the Son of Man, thus persuading him (Jones) to believe that ‘Jesus not only was earthed but also saw his mission as none other than the earthing of heaven’ (Jones, 2003:7). Jesus divine nature also means pre-eminence (Col. 1:17a), through whom ‘all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made’ John 1:3. But His work did not end with creation, His involvement with the world has since continued in its sustenance. Consequently, ‘in him all things hold together’ (Col. 1:17b). Conversely without Him things will fall apart. This buttresses the idea of a Christocentric motivation for creation care. Anything short will feed into an anthropocentric trap, which is at the heart of what Zizioulas (2006:273-274) has criticised, as the notion that more law enforcement,

more lifestyle changes, indeed more ethics and existential motivations, would make the desired difference. He believes except there is a deep culture change, even in the church, things are bound to continue as they are. The kind of culture change capable of bringing permanent transformation could only happen when people's hearts have been regenerated by the redemptive work of Christ. This will lead to a sense of concern for creation steeped in 'love in the deepest sense' (Zizioulas, 2006:274).

2.7 The Fall of Man and Its Cosmic Consequences

The sense of the fall of humanity from God's grace is a traditional Christian doctrine anchored both in Old and New Testaments. As early as Genesis 3 the sin of Adam and Eve robbed them of their fellowship with God, it brought punishment on them, with negative consequences on the rest of creation. Later, it will also be seen that Israel's disobedience had consequences on the land, including drought, famine, insecurity, exile, disease, and even death (Judges 2:8-15, Nehemiah 1:6-9, Isaiah 24:1-7, Jeremiah 5:27-28, 12:4, 9:10-14, Hosea 4:1-3). 2 Chronicles 7:13-15 particularly makes a link between Israel's sin and their punishment, and between their repentance (and God's forgiveness and the healing of their land).¹² Spencer and White (2007:139) powerfully buttress the relationship between the people and the land when they said, 'environmental degradation is a direct consequence of disobedience: violating God's law not only offends God and harms others but damages the shared environment on

¹² During the reign of King Solomon God made a promise to His covenant people at the dedication of the temple Thus God said to Solomon,

'When I shut the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land' (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

which we depend'. The consequences of human sin on creation, and God's ultimate plan of redemption was captured succinctly by FF Bruce, when he said:

The doctrine of a cosmic fall is implicit in the biblical record from Genesis 3 (where the ground is cursed for man's sake) to Revelation 22 (where the curse is finally removed); it is indeed demanded by a world-outlook which endeavours to do justice to the biblical doctrine of creation and to the facts of life as we know them. Man is part of 'nature', and the whole 'nature' of which he forms part was created good, has been involved in frustration and futility by sin, and will ultimately be redeemed. It is no accident that the redemption of 'nature' is here seen as coinciding with the redemption of man's body – that part of his being which links him with the material creation. Man was put in charge of the 'lower' creation and involved it with him when he fell; through the redemptive work of the 'second man' the entail of the fall is broken not only for man himself but for the creation which is dependent on him' (Bruce, 1985:160).

Romans 8:22-25 captures the impact and consequence of man's sin on the rest of creation with emotive language that reflects pain and distress, when creation is said to be 'groaning as in the pains of childbirth' (vs 22). This groaning of creation is a pervasive one, encompassing the whole created order, including humanity. Consequently, Christians cannot be passive to the global environmental crisis which is part of the groaning.

2.8 The Redemption and Reconciliation of all Things

But beyond the groaning creation is its hope for God's eternal redemption. Irenaeus argues that

'because the Son became incarnate there is a continuity between creation and redemption, between all the will and works of God in and towards the world...it is therefore the material world as a whole which is destined for redemption, and indeed participating in it by virtue of the work of the eschatological Spirit' (Gunton, 1997:142).

The good news, therefore, is that there is not only an unbroken narrative linking humanity's sin with consequence on creation, but as well a connection between humanity's redemption and the redemption of creation, based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. For just as sin had cosmic impact, the spiritual implication of salvation was also of a cosmic proportion, argues Pedersen (2001:44). What looked like a cataclysmic failure was eventually redeemed in Jesus Christ, who has reconciled all

things to Himself through the cross (Col. 1:20).¹³ In his argument FF Bruce (1988) states that:

it is not only the people of God that have this hope of glory. All creation, says Paul, is waiting with earnest longing for the day when the sons of God will be manifested in glory. At present, as the Preacher proclaimed, 'Vanity of vanities' is writ large over all things beneath the sun (Ec. 1:2; 12:8). But this vanity, this state of futility, frustration and bondage, is only temporary; just as humanity at present falls short of the glory of God, so creation as a whole cannot attend the full end for which it was brought into being. Like humanity, creation must be redeemed because, like humanity, creation has been subject to a fall (Bruce, 1988:160).

The salvation of humanity is figuratively the first fruit of God's redemption plan, and then the rest of creation followed in the same grand masterplan (Romans 8:21, 23).¹⁴ Consequently creation 'is waiting for us, for you and me, for all God's children, to be revealed. Then, at last, creation will see its true rulers, and will know that the time has come for it to be rescued from corruption' (Wright, 2004:151). This therefore places a burden on Christians to respond to the groaning of creation, to advocate for its protection and sustainability, and to seek for justice for all God's human and non-human creation. Bauckham (2010) adds that,

What the earth mourns is the withering and destruction of its inhabitants, flora and fauna, and so Paul's phrase "bondage to decay" or "bondage to a process of destruction" (Rom. 8:21) is an appropriate description of the state to which God has assigned the creation because of human sin (Bauckham, 2010:96-97).

The very incarnation of Christ into the world is therefore a powerful message of hope that challenges any idea of God's aloofness or abandonment of His world.

¹³ Mark the scope of Christ's reconciling ministry as encompassing all things, on earth and in heaven, covering both human and non-human creation. This universal application of salvation to all is repeated in other NT (John 12:31, Romans 3:23 and 11:26, Ephesians 1:10, 1 Tim. 2:4, 1 Tim. 4:10, 2 Peter 3:9), in reference to all humanity and cosmically to all things as Kusumita Pedersen (2001:44) suggests.

¹⁴ Compared with other Scriptures, believers in Thessalonica are told that, 'God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth' (2 Thess. 2:13). James tells his audience, 'He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created' (Jms 1:18). And finally at the end of their earthly pilgrimage God's chosen people are described as, 'those who...were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb' (Rev. 14:4).

It should be emphasised that Paul cannot be read in isolation of the vision of the prophets since he ‘assumes the same kind of close relationship between human wrongdoing and the wellbeing of the non-human creation that the prophets do’ (Bauckham, 2010:100). One of such prophets of the Old Testament, Isaiah, spoke about humanity’s relation with God and with the natural world. Margot Hodson’s comment on this is illuminating, as it suggests that:

Understanding how to balance human and environmental needs for present and future generations is an essential key to sustainable living, and this question is addressed in a number of places in the Hebrew Bible. The book of the prophet Isaiah in particular is rich in natural imagery and incisive in its social comment. It was written in the context of social and political turmoil, and the images of nature presented to us are related to human actions and human interactions with God. Understanding how these relationships are portrayed enables us to uncover the underlying perception of the connection between God, humans and the rest of the material world (Hodson, 2007:171-172).

God’s commitment to His creation made His Son incarnate in the world in a human body despite its ‘limitations and finitude’ (Spencer and White, 2007:77). Although Jesus was God, He humbled himself at His incarnation and became as one of us (mortals), but most of all He died our death and took our curses that we and creation might be redeemed (Galatians 3:13, Philippians 2:6-8). Therefore, God’s redeemed people (the Church) represent the new humanity (2 Cor 5:17), having crucified the old nature with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20-22), and been transformed into the image of God’s Son (Romans 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18).

2.9 The Declaration of Jubilee

With redemption comes liberation from bondage, a notion at the heart of jubilee – a time in Jewish history and calendar when both people and their possessions were released from debt and bondage (Manser *et al*, 1988:7511-7512). Jesus’ declaration of jubilee in Luke 4:17-19 embodies this idea. The idea of jubilee was a sign of God’s declaration of freedom to all under captivity and oppression. In that regard, Jesus as

the Son of God came to set the sinner free from the captivity of sin and of Satan (John 6:36). However jubilee had another dimension with regards to the rest of God's creation. It was also known as the year of rest for the land, the forgiveness of debts and deliverance for slaves (Manser *et al*, 1988:7511-7512). The implication of jubilee on the rest of creation is God's declaration that all things find their integrity and freedom in Jesus Christ.

Jubilee is imbedded in the Sabbath rest God established in the order of creation. As such it is erroneous to talk about the six-day creation, as such Moltmann (1985:277) stresses that 'according to the biblical traditions creation and the Sabbath belong together'. The seventh day matters in God's scheme because it symbolises the climax of God's creative activity in that He rested. It is also rest for human beings, the land, and the rest of the created order (Exodus 23:10-11), the idea of which encourages restraint (Bookless, 2007:33). By ceasing from their activities and taking their rest human beings indirectly cede control back to God who is able to hold everything together. The recognition of the Sabbath is what sets moral limits to economics and labour relations necessary to apply restraint. Among the Hebrews jubilee 'celebrated the spiritual relation of the world to God by sanctifying time, and the work of the agrarian year' (Northcott, 2007:11).

2.10 Apocalyptic Visions versus a Theology of Hope

An eschatological hope is one of the cardinal beliefs of the Christian faith from the earliest writings (Southgate, 2006:194), and is enshrined in all the major creeds. Apart from the promise to send another helper (the Holy Spirit) to help and comfort the saints, Jesus also promised that He will return (Matt. 24, John 14:3; Acts 1:11). Paul's treatise regarding the resurrection (1 Cor. 15), and the second coming of Christ (1

Thess. 4:13-18), debunks early controversies that Christ had already come (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Peter also writes about the day of the Lord in his epistle in an apocalyptic sense (2 Peter 3:1-15). However, the most controversial of the apocalyptic writings is the book of Revelation, which has been interpreted both literally and figuratively.

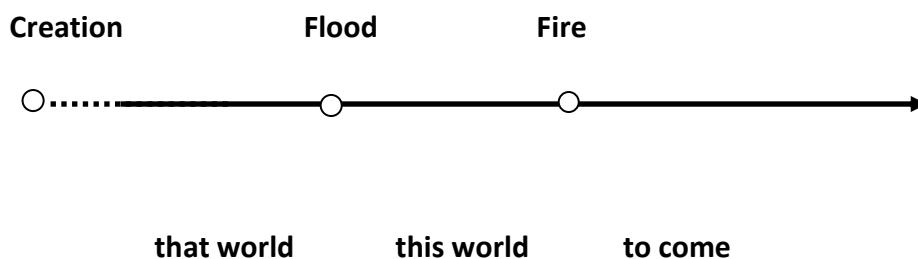
The question is, will there be a physical return of Christ? Will there be a cessation of life as is presently known? Will there be a physical taking away (rapture) of the saints after the resurrection? Is there a real heaven and hell, and will there be a new earth distinct from this one, or will there rather be a renewal of this present earth? All these questions and more, including implications on current realities, have agitated Christians of all ages in no small measure. Interestingly, Scriptures give no detail about specific times. Specifically, how does our understanding of the end times affect our response to earth's ecological crisis?

There are two broad eschatological schools – the millennialists and the amillennialists. They derive their names from the idea in Revelation 20 of the devil being incarcerated for one thousand years (a millennium), before or after the second coming of Christ. Millennialists are further divided into two groups, the pre-millennialists and the post-millennialists, divided along the line of when the coming of Jesus Christ and the rapture will take place within that context. The difference is that amillennialists dispute that there is any such literal event that involves the physical taking away of the saints.

But of all these views, pre-millennial eschatology appears to have received the harshest criticism, especially as it seems to be the view of many evangelicals who have been accused of being fundamentalist and responsible for the negative attitude of some Christians towards the environment. The indifference is drawn from passages

such as Hebrews 1:10-12 and 2 Peter 3, which are interpreted to mean the total destruction of the present heaven and earth by fire. These will give way to the creation of an entirely new heaven and earth (Orr, 2005:290-292). For that reason, some in that group argue that there is no need to waste time to save a planet that will eventually be destroyed when there are still many souls to be saved. To these people, Ludwig Feuerbach charges that, 'nature, the world, has no value, no interest for the Christian. The Christian only thinks of himself and the salvation of his soul' (Feuerbach, 1957: 287).

Some modern scholars promote renderings of thorny apocalyptic passages such as 2 Pet. 3:10 to de-emphasise a total destruction of the earth, but affirm some basic kind of continuity (Bouma-Prediger, 2001:77). The John Ray Initiative¹⁵ puts it in a linear representation, thus



The idea from this diagram is that at each time when there has been a divine intervention leading to some form of destruction it has not meant a total annihilation, but a kind of purging in the same form that fire refines precious metal or a launderer washes a dirty garment (Isaiah 1:25; Daniel 11:35; Malachi 3:3). This view appeals to a secularist approach to eschatology, which runs along the line of a social gospel steeped in the notion of pragmatism and empiricism (Bosch 1999). It envisions God's kingdom

¹⁵ The JRI Briefing paper No.3

realised in the 'here and now', and encourages actions that lead to creating an egalitarian society (Bosch 1999:321).

These debates, especially the harsh criticisms and name calling only serves to polarise Christians, and actually fails to recognise, as T.C. Hammond points out, that there are no straight-jacket block of views. Even evangelical Christians have no common eschatological position, notwithstanding that they are agreed about the second coming of Jesus Christ (Hammond, 1968:179).¹⁶ Furthermore, it does not really matter who is right? Should the concern for Christians not be to understand that the earth is a gift from God to be enjoyed, cherished and cared for? What does it matter if God chooses, in His wisdom, to destroy this present creation and make an entirely new heaven and earth (Revelation 21)? These posers should refocus attention from things that are absolutely God's prerogative to those that are within human purview – evangelisation for the saving of souls, and seeking justice (in all its ramification) for humanity and the rest of creation – guarding and tending what God has given us while we are still here.

The belief in the Second Coming of Christ and the fulfilment of God's promises to make all things new should rekindle hope in the Christian in the midst of the gloomy picture of the world around us. It should comfort the believer in the knowledge that God is ultimately in control of His creation and that He will have the final decision about its future.

¹⁶ Among Christians there are millennialists and there are amillennialists; and among the millennialists there are pre- and post-millennialists. A classic example of the impact of the premillennialist eschatology is how, according to Michael Northcott's analysis, belief in the imminent coming of Christ among top US administration officials seems to have influenced the abandonment of plans to tackle problems of the environment during the Ronald Reagan and George Bush administrations (Northcott, 2004:67).

2.11 Conclusion

The case made in this chapter is that the church, including the PCN, needs a clearly articulated biblical theology of creation that is ecologically rooted in terms of promoting the idea of community, interdependence, and mutuality in the *oikoumene*. It has been argued that stewardship is the logical outflow of the idea that God commanded mankind to have dominion over the rest of creation. What flows from this complex interrelationships of creation is that no part of it can survive without the whole. Therefore it calls on humanity, as bearers of God's image, to show respect for one another and for the rest of creation. It calls for restraint in the use of earth's finite resources, especially the non-renewables. Human beings are also to take responsibility over creation as they will ultimately be accountable to God for how they used it. These four Rs (relationship, respect, restraint, and responsibility), in my view, are at the heart of an integrated stewardship-based ecological theology of creation.

The PCN in theory holds to all of the above doctrines of creation. This means the church is not bereft of theological resources to draw from. It consequently suggests that any inhibition to the church's full participation in dealing with the ecological crisis in the Niger Delta must be coming from elsewhere. Consequently, Chapter Seven will examine the possibility of a robust, functional, local holistic ecotheological framework to aid the PCN's involvement. Meanwhile, the next chapter (Three) will be exploring the Niger Delta terrain to identify some specific environmental problems emanating from oil and gas exploration that have rendered the Niger Delta unsustainable.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF OIL PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA AND THE RESPONSE OF MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the state of the environment in the Niger Delta, with reference to key oil-related environmental pollution that impact on environmental sustainability in the region. The chapter utilizes published literature on the environmental problems in the Niger Delta to analyse the socio-political barriers to environmental sustainability in Nigeria.¹ Published literature is being adopted as the primary basis for analysis because most of the published literatures on the subject are mainly by local or African authors.² Furthermore, the time and expense of repeating the collection of the data that are already available in published literature is wasteful and evidently beyond the scope of this research. Published data is also being used to triangulate the primary data collected during interviews.

In addition to other issues raised in this chapter, the key grievances of the Niger Delta people against the government of Nigeria and the multinational oil companies operating in their region have been summarised by Rhuks Ako as comprising:

ownership and control of oil; land and compensation issues (including oil-related environmental issues); and, abuse of human rights that result from opposition to the previous two (Ako, 2015:3).

Environmental degradation associated with oil pollution is experienced across the entire Niger Delta, covering nine states of the Nigerian federation. In Delta State, the

¹ Useful primary data collected from the field, in the form of interviews, conversations, surveys, and printed church documents, will be used in subsequent chapters.

² Curiously only a handful of Western scholars have dedicated themselves to researching the Niger Delta crisis, despite it being in the news for many years.

state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has since the 1970s been polluting the Ubeji River by the discharge of untreated waste water from its refinery (DonPedro, 2005:57). Similar oil-related degradation has been experienced in places such as Okoroba and Oloibiri (Bayelsa State), Warri, Uzere and Ughelli (Delta State), Ogoni (Rivers State), Iko (Akwa Ibom State), Ukwu (Abia State), and so on (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:96-122; Ifemeje & Egbuna, 2016). However, this thesis focuses on Rivers State, especially, areas around the Port Harcourt, as the petroleum industry is the largest source of pollution in Rivers State (Muritala, 2012:121).

3.2 Oil-Related Degradations and Their Causes

Oil-related degradation is from varied sources, including equipment failure, obsolete oil infrastructures, sabotage, activities of oil thieves, and others. These have been worsened by neglect, corruption, poor regulation, and lately by militancy. Until off-shore deep-water exploration took off seriously in Nigeria, most of the extractive activities were inland. As a result there have been contacts between the oil exploration industry and communities, with negative experiences, for as long as the oil industry has been active in the country.

The cases used in this research are illustrative of the reality obtainable in most oil-producing communities in the delta. The chapter ends with how different stakeholders have responded to the issues of environmental degradation. These stakeholders are notably those deemed to have primary stake in the oil industry – the government as the custodian and dispenser of the oil wealth, the oil companies with pecuniary interest, the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta who suffer the impact, and the wider world community.

3.2.1 Oil Spill and its Biophysical³ Contamination of the Environment

The quantity of oil spilled since the beginning of production activities in the Niger Delta in 1958 has been a matter of debate, depending on who is reporting – whether the oil companies, Nigeria’s Department for Petroleum Resources, or even the oil-bearing communities. However, Amnesty International referencing a group of environmental and oil experts:

...put the figure for oil spilt, onshore and offshore, at 9 to 13 million barrels of oil over the past 50 years. The experts took into consideration all sources of oil discharged into the environment, including oil in process water, oil discharges from tanker washing, oil in gas flares, oil spills from vehicle and road tanker accidents and used oil dumped in the delta, as well as spills during the Biafran war, when many oil installations were either bombed or sabotaged. To put this into perspective, people living in the Niger Delta have experienced oil spills on par with the Exxon Valdez every year over the last 50 ears. Despite this, the government and the companies have not taken effective measures over these 50 years to prevent oil spills from recurring, or to properly address the impacts of oil spills (Amnesty, 2009:16).

Consequently the negative fallout from oil and gas production has adversely affected the land, water and air quality in the Niger delta. This is due to oil spills, dumping of production wastes, and the flaring of gas (Olawuyi, 2015; Okonta & Douglas, 2001). The oil spills are as ‘a result of corrosion of oil pipes, poor maintenance of infrastructure, leaks and human error, as well as from vandalism, theft of oil, or sabotage’ (Amnesty International, 2009:4).

For example, in December 2011 there was a major oil disaster in one of Nigeria’s offshore fields managed by Shell and its joint venture partners, including the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). The leak from the Bonga platform, located seventy five miles off the Nigerian coast is reported by Shell to have released about forty thousand barrels (1.7million gallons) of crude oil into the ocean (Vidal, 2011). And

³ Biophysical suggests that there is ‘both a physical component associated with the nature of the hazard and its first-order physical impacts, and a biological or social component associated with the properties of the affected system that act to amplify or reduce the damage resulting from these first-order impacts’ (Brooks, 2003:4).

although Shell made efforts to contain the disaster, the crisis buttresses the reality of the negative impact of the oil industry on the Nigerian and global environment. Of particular interest in John Vidal's report is the issue of trust in reporting oil spills by oil companies. The industry's oil-spill watch-dog, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, is criticised alongside other regulatory agencies for being ill-equipped, unprofessional and compromised (Agbonifo, 2015:90), and more often reliant on the same polluters (e.g. Shell) for logistics and data (Konne, 2014:195). This situation, she argues, raises a conflict of interest, especially when regulatory agencies lack independence, and are closely aligned with the government establishment involved in joint oil ventures with the multinational companies they supposedly regulate.

The above-mentioned situation mirrors the Nigerian state's own perceived weakness or lack of capacity to discharge its statutory functions of proper governance; protecting the populace and defending them from external aggressors; creating the enabling environment for the people to flourish and meet their basic needs; and ensuring the people's right to a wholesome environment (Ahonsi, 2011:34; Konne, 2014:187-189).

By Shell's own admission, it spilt an average of seven thousand three hundred and fifty barrels of oil annually from 1989 to 1994 (SPDC, 1995; Amnesty, 2009:15). This figure is challenged by many stakeholders who think the figures are understated, especially as they do not account for unreported incidents that are classified as 'minor' (Okonta & Douglas 2001:89). Furthermore, just as pollution from the oil fields has implications beyond the Nigerian context, it also goes beyond the bio-physical sphere to threaten socio-economic activities (Monsuru Muritala 2012:120-121).

O'Rourke and Connolly (2003) highlight other ways in which oil exploration is problematic to the environment, including the contamination of soils, surface and

ground water with oil sheen on the surface as evidence (The Telegraph, 2017). This happens with the presence of crude oil and chemicals such as xylene, benzene, and toluene. In Bodo City, one of the sites of this research, Amnesty (2009:7) noted an eye-witness account of pollution which stated that: 'If you want to go fishing, you have to paddle for about four hours through several rivers before you can get to where you can catch fish and the spill is lesser ... some of the fishes we catch, when you open the stomach, it smells of crude oil'. One of my informants narrated a similar account of the suffering of local fishermen (F22/2012/33).

3.2.2 Gas Flaring

Gas flaring is the burning of gas that is released in the process of extracting. It is otherwise known as 'associated gas, produced with crude oil or from gas fields' (Ismail and Umukoro, 2012:1). Physical observations of communities close to the gas flaring sites reveal a high deposit of soot in the atmosphere, on roof tops, the bare ground and plants. These get mixed with rain water to further poison the environment and aquifers (Ismail & Umukoro, 2012:3). It is only predictable that the food chain is affected in this scenario and people's sources of livelihood destroyed (Amnesty, 2009:8). Ismail & Umukoro (2012: 3) warn that some of the over two hundred and fifty toxins identified in the flared gas and effluent chemicals are carcinogenic.

Nigeria ranks among the worst OPEC countries in flared gases, and among the greatest known contributors to global warming through their release of greenhouse gases (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:90). Michiko Ishisone (2004:1) gives the volume of Nigeria's flaring of gas as '17.2 billion m³ of natural gas per year ... This gas flaring expends huge amounts of energy and causes environmental degradation and disease.' The scale of economic loss is typified by the fact that these flares generate over forty five billion

kilowatts of heat (Uyigue & Agho, 2007:13), enough energy to power a quarter of the African continent (Ishisone, 2004:2).

Paradoxically, from my personal experience, Nigeria is a country grossly deficient in meeting its energy needs, requiring individuals to acquire portable power generating sets to augment the deficiency. It is, therefore, curious that although flared gas can be collected and put to economic and developmental use, this has not happened in Nigeria. Not until recently when some power stations have been directly linked to gas sources, albeit with frequent disruption by the crisis in the Niger Delta. The answer partly lies in the prohibitive cost of gathering the flared gas or reinjecting it into the ground as a discouraging factor. The cheaper option is to burn the gas and pay the paltry fine imposed by government regulators, leaving the people with enormous health and environmental costs (Ishisone, 2004:1-3).

Gas flaring creates ancillary ecological problems besides polluting the atmosphere, one of which is the precipitation of acid rain with devastating impact across the Niger Delta region, as O C Zudonu (2015:130-139) argues. Acid rain could be wet in the form of 'cloudwater, dew, fog and rain', or dry in the form of 'particles and gases' (Zudonu, 2015:130). He suggests that, there is a correlation between increased oil production and the rising case of acid rain, arguing that:

in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the awareness of the menace, acid rain, became increasingly high in the 70s as the activities of oil and gas climaxed (Zudonu, 2015:130).

This calls to question the responsibility and corporate ethics of the operating oil corporations on one hand, and also highlights the incapacity of the regulators on the other hand. Okonta & Douglas (2001:86) give an insight into the complexity of the situation when they quoted a 1983 report of the Nigerian National Petroleum

Corporation (NNPC) in which it was put strongly, that: ‘since the inception of the oil industry in Nigeria more than twenty-five years ago, there has been no concerned effort on the part of the government, let alone the oil operators, to control the environmental problems associated with the industry’ (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:87). It may be an extreme view, but Okonta & Douglas (2001:86) could only equate what has been going on in the Niger Delta to a ‘vicious ecological war’ against the land and people of the delta region.

However, things have moved on as the data in Table 3.1 shows that there has been a consistent and considerable reduction in gas flaring:

Table 3. 1 Table showing the consistent reduction of Gas Flaring in Nigeria in million cubic metres (Courtesy: Ismail & Umukoro, 2012:10)

Year	Gas produced	Gas flared	% of gas flared
1996	35450.00	26590.00	75.01
1997	37150.00	24234.00	65.23
1998	37039.00	23632.00	63.80
1999	43636.00	22362.00	51.25
2000	42732.00	24255.00	56.76
2001	52453.00	26759.00	51.02
2002	48192.45	24835.58	51.53
2003	51766.03	23943.03	46.25
2004	58963.61	25090.91	42.55
2005	59284.97	23002.71	38.80
2006	82036.86	28584.39	34.84
2007	84707.34	27307.13	32.24
2008	80603.61	21811.00	27.06
2009	64882.86	17987.59	27.72
2010	67757.65	16468.18	24.30

Source: NNPC (1997); NNPC (2009a); NNPC (2010) Adapted from [62].

Even though it is recognised that Nigeria has been reducing the proportion of gas flared, it is still by far (with Russia) the worst culprit compared with other oil producing

countries (Ismail and Umukoro, 2012:9). Uyigue and Agho (2007), Ojo & Oluwafemi (2004), Moro (2008), Velasquez (1999), and Okonta & Douglas (2001:93-105) agree that gas flaring, and other related phenomena such as acid rain, have adverse effect on the people and their environment. Evidentially, they (the environmental contaminants) have been linked with 'endocrine dysfunction, immune dysfunction, reproductive disorders and autoimmune rheumatic diseases... premature deaths, respiratory illnesses, asthma and cancer' (Ismail & Umukoro, 2012:3).

3.2.3 The Impact of Gas Flaring on Global Warming and Climate Change

Gas flaring and acid rain are having wider impact beyond the shores of Nigeria, contributing to global warming and climate change (Obi & Rustad, 2011:4; Nzeadigbe *et al*, 2011:13-14). These phenomena are severely affecting lives in the Niger Delta. It is exacerbated by the deforestation of Niger Delta's swamps and rainforest through oil exploration and logging which reduce the area's absorptive capacity and depriving it of its natural air-conditioning systems (Filho, 2008:1; Northcott, 2007:2). The study of satellite images between 1986 and 2003 indicates that the Niger Delta lost over fifty thousand acres of its mangrove forest (Odoemena, 2011:125). The loss of biodiversity following such rapid deforestation heightens the build-up of GHG. It exposes the region to coastal erosion and, if unchecked, might lead to aridity as has been experienced widely in Australia (Northcott, 2007:2-5).

The build-up of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and nitrous oxide, in the atmosphere, creates greenhouse effects with the increase of retained heat in the earth systems (Northcott, 2007:2).⁴ This rising temperature is making life

⁴ Whether climate change is anthropogenic (instigated by human activities) or of natural causes has been a matter of debate among scientists (Capstick and Pidgeon, 2014; Rensburg, 2015). However the scientists are in agreement that the climate is changing, and an overwhelming majority of them agree that

difficult in some parts of the Niger Delta (Ishisone, 2004:4). Data indicates that Nigeria contributes 'about 12 million metric tons of methane' into the atmosphere (Valasques, 1999:70). These go beyond impacting the immediate local and national ecosystems to polluting the global environment by adding to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that contribute to global warming. They also contribute to the destabilisation of natural weather patterns, which includes erratic rainfall patterns, disruption of agricultural production and others.

Adaptation proactively looks ahead to potential changes in the climate in future, while coping mechanisms are reactionary to existing changes (Nzeadibe *et al*, 2011:21). It is unclear what mechanism the government has put in place, alongside strategies for the pollution control, to help citizens deal with the problems. It is one thing to recognise the reality of climate change, but another to take action. So far, it does not appear that there is adequate awareness about climate change among local people in the Niger Delta, there are also no obvious systems put in place by the government to help people adapt to the changes. Adjustments and adaptations will be needed from the micro (family and community) to the macro (regional and national) levels. Traditional coping mechanisms will need to be augmented with more modern scientific methods, and overwhelmed communities will need to be empowered to be less vulnerable. Unquestionably, the struggle for scarce resources will get worse, leading to more inter-communal clashes (Fasona & Omojola, 2005:4-5). Already the knowledge that oil is an exhaustible resource (with the shutting down of once active oil wells such as Oloibiri) is heightening anxiety in the Niger Delta (Omeje, 2007:52).

human action is causing the rise in global temperatures, and that it is linked to the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) (Northcott, 2007:272). This is buttressed by 'the clear correlation between increased greenhouse gas emissions and marked biological and climatic changes... The triple footprints of rising temperatures, extreme weather and ecosystem change is therefore much more reliable than earlier accounts of global warming based solely on temperature rise' (Northcott, 2007:26).

The question is how may the PCN find mission opportunities in supporting communities to adapt and cope with the challenges that oil degradation and climate change is heralding? In a context such as Nigeria's, where energy supply is unreliable, further pressure on natural resources cannot be overlooked as communities have traditionally depended on these same resources for their needs. For instance, firewood is used for heating while gas is being flared in their backyard; they are expected to drink from the same polluted streams in the absence of pipe-borne water, and so on.

Although the federal government of Nigeria has set up a 'Special Unit' on Climate Change in the Federal Ministry of the Environment, the impact of its awareness program has not yet been felt at the grassroots where the farmers and fishermen are (Nzeadigbe, *et al*, 2011:13-14).

3.2.4 The Impact of Dredging and the Discharge of effluents on Forests and Marine Resources

Oil production has destroyed forest and marine resources by the discharge of production wastes into the ecosystem (Emeseh, 2011:61). Oil companies and their contractors dredge the swamps to provide access to production sites. Oluwaniyi, in this regards, noted that man-made

...canalization of the region to bring in heavy oil equipment destroys the fragile ecology, resulting either in the silting up of water bodies or the intrusion of salt water into freshwater bodies with disastrous consequences (Oluwaniyi, 2011:153).

The mixture of salt and fresh water systems affects sources of drinking water and biological diversity of local ecological systems (Konne, 2014:185). Furthermore, it is often the case that:

Apart from land which is lost in the process of the dredging proper, dredged material is dumped on either side of the canals, and because this waste is usually high in organic content and turns acidic in the process of oxidisation, it destroys the ecology of the

surrounding area where it is dumped. After a while, some of the dredged material is washed back into the creeks or canal constructed in the process of site preparation, and this tends to increase sedimentation in the creeks and the turbidity of the water, leading to a significant reduction in the penetration rate of sunlight (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:94)

These production wastes affect rare animal, fish and plant species thus mounting further pressure on the general ecosystem. Silting and sedimentation also destroy natural fish resources, with negative impact on the local economy depending on it. All of these affect the sustainability of the region, and happen mainly because of poor industrial practice in Nigeria's oil sector, weak regulation, imprecise terminology used in some of the laws, an outdated enforcement, punishment and compensation system, and so on (ECCR, 2010:77; Konne, 2014:182-183; Ekhator, 2016:57-77).

The excavations have also resulted in erosion which takes away the top soil that is vital for food production and the general integrity and consistency of agricultural land (Konne, 2014:182-185). The usefulness of Nigeria's mangrove forest is underscored in a report of a study conducted by the USAID which states that,

Mangroves provide a number of ecological services, including the habitat and nursery ground for a productive range of fish, crustacean, and mollusk species that are harvested locally and in off-shore fisheries. Local residents also use mangroves for firewood and for drying their fishing nets (USAID, 2008:8).

The process of the loss of the mangrove swamps and the contiguous rain forest is described thus:

An area of land is identified and demarcated. Then the path through which the seismic waves will travel (the shot and receiver lines) is cleared of flora and other likely impediments, to a minimum width of 1 metre. This is done with machetes and involves the cutting down of huge swathes of trees and other vegetation. When the clearing is completed, deep holes are dug, flushed with standing or creek water, and explosives (usually dynamite) are placed in them, alongside detonation equipment. The explosives are then detonated and the signals recorded at a central recording station using the appropriate instruments (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:91)

The impact of this intrusive activity on both the ecosystem and those who depend on it, and especially the use of explosives, is palpable. It affects biodiversity and depletes plant, animal and bird species. The process is repeated across the region as new oil

exploration sites are located. Shell is said to have cut thirty thousand kilometres of 2D seismic lines in the mangrove forest and about the same area in the 3D version by 2001, according to Okonta & Douglas (2001:93). Although this information is debatable, most of these operations, Okonta and Douglas say, have been carried out without credible environmental impact assessment (EIA). There are other unintended fallouts when forests are cut down – it opens the way for opportunistic invaders such as loggers, poachers, and so on (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:89, 92).⁵

A further implication of deforestation is that it creates unemployment as it puts fishermen, farmers and hunters out of business. With most of them lacking requisite education and skills to be employed in the oil industry are, accordingly, consigned to poverty. Those possessing the skills usually cite marginalisation for failure to secure jobs in the oil sector. All of these feed into the anger and frustration that has resulted in the sabotage of pipelines, with further negative impact on the environment.

And on a global scale, deforestation deprives the earth's system of its natural 'lungs' (plants) that take in Carbon dioxide (CO₂) and release oxygen (Filho, 2008:1; Northcott, 2007:2). Consequently, deforestation short-circuits this natural respiratory circulation process, and is a major contributor to human-generated greenhouse gasses such as Carbon dioxide (CO₂) and Methane (CH₃) in the atmosphere.

⁵ Using the case of Australia, Michael Northcott explains how deforestation can also lead to desertification:

Tropical and subtropical forests in their natural states are rich and wondrous ecosystems which act like natural air conditioning. The microclimate of the forest draws moisture from the ocean and atmosphere and creates updrafts which form rain clouds. As the rain falls it is taken up by tree canopies, fallen leaves, mosses and tree roots, and seeps into the soil before reaching streams and rivers. When the trees are gone the rain at first continues to fall, but when it does it falls on bare earth and washes into streams and rivers. Over time the more deforestation, the rain began to dissipate, the clouds no longer form and the land becomes parched. Eventually it is at risk of turning into a bare desert (Northcott, 2007:2-3).

Although desertification is a far-fetched phenomenon in the mangrove rain forest, yet Northcott's analysis shows that it is possible, and should not be ignored.

3.3 Socio-economic and Political Barriers to Sustainable Oil and Gas Production in the Niger Delta

Despite the level of policy measures taken over the last few decades regarding how oil in the Niger Delta can be sustainably produced with minimal negative impact on the environment, unsustainable practices in oil and gas industry remain prevalent in Nigeria. Many socio-economic and political factors continue to provide the right atmosphere for environmental degradation and unsustainable oil production practices to remain in the region. This section unpacks some of the key socio-economic and political barriers to sustainable oil and gas production in the Niger Delta region.

3.3.1 Lopsided Economy and Endemic Poverty

Despite the vast amount of resources in the Niger Delta, it remains home to some of the world's poorest people (Olawuyi 2016). Over the years, post-independence from Britain in 1960, oil has gradually displaced agriculture as the main revenue earner (Philip, *et al*, 2009:9). The illusion that oil can create, a hassle-free life and easy riches, lulled people into a false sense of socio-economic security (Watts, 2008:37). This illusion quickly dissipated as the destruction of the mainstay sectors of the economy (manufacturing and agriculture) gained momentum. This is not the least because oil wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few.

By the 1980s the crippling effect on the Nigerian economy due to over-dependence on oil, following the oil boom of the 1970s, had become glaring (Struthers, 1985:1-2). This led to what is commonly known as the 'Dutch Disease' (Humphreys, *et al*, 2007:xi).

John Struthers explains this phenomenon further, saying:

The term Dutch Disease was first used in the mid Seventies and referred to the adverse effect on Dutch manufacturing of the Schlochteren natural gas discoveries of the sixties

via their impact on the Dutch real exchange rate. The appreciation of the currency consequent upon the gas discoveries was viewed as having a detrimental effect on Dutch manufacturing output and exports (Struthers, 1985:2).

Similarly, the enormous inflow of foreign currency during the oil boom in Nigeria resulted in a false (higher) valuation of the local currency, the Naira. Also the economy became import dependent, undermining local manufacturing capacity, a situation compounded by spiralling inflation, unemployment, and other economic and social difficulties.

Unfortunately the oil boom itself did not last for too long. The nation was jolted by the incidence of plunging income sparked by falling oil prices following the oil glut of the late 70s and the early 1980s. All of these give credence to the opinion of some analysts who insist that the country is labouring under the dreaded 'Resource Curse', which George Soros describes as 'the failure of resource-rich countries to benefit from their natural wealth' (Humphreys, *et al*, 2007: xi).⁶ Ryszard Kapuscinsky called the illusion of oil wealth 'the fairy tale of oil' (Watts, 2008:37).

A string of austerity measures and structural adjustment programs (SAP) employed by successive Nigerian governments, coupled with the deliberate devaluation of the Naira could not immediately revive the economy. Another round of oil price rise in the late 1990s and 2000s gave the nation a fresh lease of life, but the roller-coaster has kicked in again with falling oil prices since 2014.

⁶ George Soros explains further that 'the resource curse is a complex phenomenon. Three different processes come into play. The first is the currency appreciation due to resource revenues and its negative effect on the competitive position of other industries. This is called the "Dutch Disease." The second is the fluctuation in commodity prices and its disruptive effects. And the third is the effect on the political conditions (Humphreys, *et al*, 2007: xi).'

The sight of poverty in the midst of enormous wealth is the paradox that defines the Niger Delta, and by extension Nigeria. Michael Watts (2008:42) painted this picture powerfully when he said,

The Niger Delta remains of course a paradox: why is an oil region at the same time a space of such unrelenting misery? At birth, the probability of the average Niger Deltan of not surviving until the age of 40 is 25 per cent; armies of unemployed men (referred to in the region as “the restive youth problem”) face not simply the prospect of structural unemployment but something far worse: no future at all. The well of youth rage runs very deep. Desperation and penury mired in corporate and state irresponsibility are a volatile mix.

This view about the scourge of poverty is not limited to the Niger Delta, but actually expressive of the situation in other parts of Nigeria and most African countries (Kalu, 2006). However, in the case of the Niger Delta, it is thought to be structural, driving young people into all sorts of nefarious activities, including political thuggery, hired mercenaries, kidnapping for ransom, and militancy (ICG, 2007:7-10). In the end the militant leaders were the ones who benefitted from the corruption and lawlessness that enveloped the region, to the detriment of majority of the people and the environment (Ako, 2015).⁷

The outcome of the disillusionment is that youth are reacting against the establishment and those they believe have usurped their commonwealth including local elites who they believe have fed fat on these resources. These reactions are in the form of kidnapping for ransom, oil bunkering and militancy which includes blowing up of pipelines. Poverty is therefore an outcome and oil pollution but also becomes a cause. Peet and Watts (2004:7) however warn that those who place undue emphasis on poverty and poor peasants must recognise that impoverishment is no more a cause of environmental deterioration than its obverse, namely affluence and capital. The link

⁷ This is a situation Rhuks Ako has dubbed ‘monitics’, a combination of money and politics (Ako, 2015:7).

between poverty and degradation is deceptive because the scale of degradation occasioned by the need for survival by poor peasants can arguably not be compared to that fuelled by greed and materialism.

The NDES has listed measures to combat poverty and especially youth unemployment. These include establishing labour intensive projects; a robust credit scheme to help stimulate their economy, leadership and vocational training for young people; human resource development and institutional capacity-building for communities; and the review of legal framework regarding land use and the ownership of resources to ensure greater community participation (Ekhaton, 2016:68). However, the challenge that remains is how the above list will become reality, with the fragmented political system in the country.

The NDES Report of 2004 indicates further that conflicts tend to increase in places where there are oil installations. The situation is exacerbated by various legislation transferring traditional authority over land from the community to the Federal Government (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:38-39). It has been recommended, as a part of the solution, that such unfriendly legislations be repealed (ERA, 2000; Okonta and Douglas, 2001; Moro, 2008; Ekhaton, 2016).

3.3.2 Problematic Derivation and Revenue-Sharing Principle

Flowing from an unbalanced economic system is the question of revenue allocation. Indeed, one of the contentious issues in negotiating federalism, according to Akinola & Adesopo (2011:251), involves agreeing on a system of revenue contribution and allocation. Nigeria's case was not different, as it was riddled with rancour over who controls the resources from its federation units (Omeje, 2006:35). It is also common in

a federal system for the less endowed units to vie for an equitable redistribution of income, while their more fortunate counterparts jostle for a greater share on a contribution-based formula, known as derivation principle.⁸ The derivation principle 'implies that states should receive allocations from the central pool in strict proportion to their contribution to the pool' (Akinola and Adesopo, 2011:252).

In the case of Nigeria it was fifty percent apiece between the central government (on behalf of the rest of the federation) and the contributing region at independence in 1960, at a time when the economy was mainly agro-based (Omeje, 2006:37). But the reality is that the fifty-fifty derivation principle that was in place at independence has been tinkered with severally, reducing it from fifty percent to a paltry one percent during the military era from 1966 to 1979. It was only since 1999 during the present civilian dispensation that it was increased once again to its present thirteen percent mark, in accordance with the 1999 Constitution (ICG, 113:20-21; Ekhaton, 2016:54-57).

The philosophy behind the derivation principle is that regions should have shares related to their respective volumes of contribution and impact they suffered. It is implied that:

the residents of the area from where particular revenue is generated must have suffered one way or the other in terms of external costs, which manifest in the form of pollution, disruption of both social and economic life of communities and some other undesirable consequences arising from certain types of economic activity whether in manufacturing or in drilling for oil (Akinola & Adesopo, 2011:251)

It is therefore fair that since the Niger Delta bears the negative fallout of oil extraction, namely pollution, economic and socio-cultural loss, and so on, it should have a generous share of the revenue to cover these losses. It is therefore unsurprising that

⁸ Derivation principle was the agreed formula for sharing the proceeds of natural resources in the country. When Nigeria depended on agriculture for its sustenance receipts were share 50-50 between the producing region and the central government. When oil took centre stage, agriculture was abandoned and the derivation principle heavily skewed in favour of the centre.

the unfavourable revenue sharing formula has led to cries of injustice and marginalisation in the Niger Delta in view of massive privation accentuated by massive degradation by oil production (Okonta & Douglas, 2001; Moro, 2008). Hence the call for resource control, which Itse Sagay (2001) has equated with fiscal or true federalism, which gives federating units control over resources generated from their territory, including taxes and duties.

The question that needs to be answered, however, is whether the increased derivation has made meaningful impact on the lives of the ordinary people in the region. Have the allocations received by the ruling elites in the region been properly utilised to better the lives of their own people? The reality is that not much has changed, as corruption is eating deep into these resources (Shaxson 2007:196), and poverty is still endemic in the Niger Delta. It explains in part why some people have resorted to self-help, by involving in the dangerous business of bunkering and scooping petroleum products from broken pipelines (Muritala, 2012:115), having lost faith in government to protect their rights and interests. It is therefore understandable how easy it was for intransigent ones such as Asari Dokubo to galvanise the pack of angry, unemployed youth into militancy (Shaxson, 2007:189-208). The effect of this agitation has been the destruction of oil installations, thus creating further unsustainability.

3.3.3 Inadequate Stakeholder Engagement

By stakeholders, it is meant the key interest parties relevant to the Niger Delta environmental crisis, as identified in this research. They are those instrumental to the problems, those who benefit from the situation, and/or those affected by the pollution experienced in the region. Prominent among them are:

1. The Niger Delta communities in whose land oil and gas is found, whose environment is being polluted by the extraction of these resources, and whose people are the primary sufferers of the pollution. Although in a general sense people who live and work in the Niger Delta are stakeholders, but for the purpose of this research, those who fit the description of stakeholders are strictly people who trace their ancestry to Niger Delta communities, commonly known as indigenes (Ako, 2015:9).

The idea of stakeholders used here fits the definition of Niger Delta in Section 1.2, and are represented by traditional rulers, opinion leaders, local elites (politicians, civil servants, members of the academia and business people), socio-cultural (tribal) organisations (e.g. INC and MOSOP), and representatives of youth and women organisations. Also recognised in this category of stakeholders are non-State armed groups (MEND, NDPVF, NDA, and so on), who have acquired legitimacy through the instrumentality of violence to negotiate Niger Delta causes. Even NGOs advocating on behalf of the Niger Delta people and their environment are included (See Ikpe 2000:153; Ikelegbe, 2011:126; Olaniyi, 2011:150-163; Konne, 2016:187-190).

2. The Nigerian government who by law has expropriated to itself the ownership and control of oil and gas resources, and whose major source of income is dependent on these resources.
3. The oil extraction firms, mostly international (foreign) oil companies, with their local contractors, with major investment stakes, and

4. Other interested parties, such as the United Nations and its associated bodies (UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO), international multilateral agencies (World Bank, IMF), foreign governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), churches (including the PCN), and so on.

Inadequate engagement of stakeholders has contributed to the perennial feeling of marginalisation and oppression in the Niger Delta where there is the perception of a gang-up of forces that include the government, oil companies, and the three major tribes (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) to subjugate their peoples (Watts 2004:59; Konne, 2016:190). The failure of the government and oil companies to adequately engage these stakeholders include, not consulting them at key stages of a project's life, and arbitrary compensation regimes (UNCED, 1992; Kalu & Onoyume, 2011). Such stakeholder neglect encompasses the process of developing an environmental impact assessment (EIA) through to the implementation of the project (Ereba and Dumpe, 2010:28; Konne, 2016:190; 2016:68).

Consequent upon the above feeling of not being part of the decisions that affect their very destinies the Niger Delta has been the hotbed of resistance in Nigeria, mirroring the footsteps of forebears such as Kings Pepple of Bonny and Jaja of Opobo who resisted the domination of British imperialism with dire consequences (Dike, 1972:223; Burns, 1978:141-144).⁹

⁹ A map of the Niger Delta (c. 1870) in Dike (1972:18-19) shows that the oil palm belt extended from the Benin River in the West to the River Cross in the East, extending northeastwardly towards Western Cameroons. The lower palm belt reach bordered immediately after the Igbo city of Onitsha towards the north, while the Northern Palm Belt extended even further to the confluence town of Lokoja in north central Nigeria. King Jaja controlled a large part of this trade and even got the British Crown to enter a formal treaty with him in this regard (Dike, 1972:223).

In more modern times Isaac Adaka Boro led an uprising that declared a short-lived Niger Delta People's Republic in 1966 (Ako, 2011:45), appointing himself head of state and expelling all foreigners, including non-Delta Nigerians. He voided all oil contracts, demanding that oil companies henceforth negotiate solely with him (Shaxson, 2007:197). Then Ken Saro-Wiwa became the leading intellectual light of the struggle, before the emergence of Asari Dokubo in the 1990s as warlord championing the insurgency with his Niger Delta People's Volunteers Force.

What constitutes justice is sometimes open to debate, as Bell & Morse (1999:9) argue, 'My justice may be your exploitation, and my truth may be your lies'. In that context, the reckless exploitation of natural resources and the degradation of the Niger Delta environment is perceived by some people as a war of subjugation waged by a partnership of local elites from the majority tribes and foreign capital. Moro (2008:117) brands it as internal colonialism, with the interest being profit, without concern for the people and the environment.

This context inter-tribal rivalry has encouraged the emergence of strong ethnic consciousness and identity politics, and regional alliances, especially in the Niger Delta, as a tool for collective bargaining (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2005; Ibaba, 2011:75). But it has conversely undermined the stability of the nation, as tribes jostle against one another for access to the oil wealth in particular. Even amongst the many small tribes in the region there is as well rivalry and mutual suspicion (Shaxson, 2007:189; Omeje, 2007:40-66).

In order to address perceived imbalances and the difficulty of gaining economic access into the oil wealth, the government enacted the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act of 2010. It also set up the Nigerian Content Development &

Monitoring Board (NCDMB) to help local businesses to take advantage of the opportunities created by the Act (KPMG, 2014:12). Notwithstanding, there persists the problem of inadequate representation of businesses owned by people from oil producing communities. So far, improved local content providers are mostly government cronies paired up with foreign oil companies (FOCs) (Vines, *et al*, 2009:12-18).

When it comes to the allocation of oil blocks, only about ten percent of them are with people from the South-South and South-East geo-political zones (comprising the Niger Delta). Thus, the agitation by lawmakers from the area for increased participation of their people (Ugwuanyi, 2016; Vanguard, 2016). This is not helped by the chaotic regulation of the industry by a plethora of government agencies, amidst a flawed social, economic, political and legal system, which together have exacerbated the issues (ERA 2000, Okonta & Douglas 2001, NDES 2004, Moro 2008, and UNEP 2011).

The solution is not in creating more agencies or new laws, but in taking concrete affirmative action that will, for a few years, give deliberate attention to addressing the imbalances. The framework could be in form of a quota system that will allocate a percentage of jobs, contracts, and businesses in the oil sector to qualified people from the oil-producing States of the federation. This will be similar to the quota system in the educational system in Nigeria that gives a lower cut-off point to students from disadvantaged regions to address the imbalances in admission into tertiary institutions. Regarding physical development Babatunde Ahonsi (2011:33) has suggested the adoption of a marshall plan to fast-track the economic infrastructural development of the region. This, he suggests, should be based on the Niger Delta Regional Plan prepared in 2001 by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

Quite often, as highlighted in the preceding section, it is these issues of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta that gain prominent attention, and rightly so. However, the lack of participation and consultation of stakeholders, particularly the Niger Delta communities, in decision that affect them is even more problematic. Consequently, confidence is eroded and suspicion is fuelled when, for instance, environmental impact assessments (EIA) and the inspection of oil spill sites are carried out without representatives of the affected communities (Agbonifo, 2015:89-91). Thus, the lack of stakeholder engagement and the lop-sided distribution of accruing benefits from the oil resources feeds into the grievances that lead desperate individuals into the dangerous business of oil bunkering and equipment sabotage, after they have failed to gain legitimate access.

3.3.4 Militancy and Insecurity

Karl Maier (2000) has painted the picture of a Nigerian nation that has been incapacitated since independence by its own people's penchant for violence, constant squabbles, and inept leadership. Before the present civilian political dispensation the military had held power for sixteen years (1983-1999), with an inevitable corrosion of civil ethics in social relations. It left behind a legacy of 'a deep and pervasive mentality of force, as authoritarian social behaviour percolated the order that had previously characterised social transactions in the civil society (Ukeje 2001:337). It was under their watch that the non-violent Niger Delta protests turned into an armed insurgency, especially after the slaying of the late Ogoni activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Many reasons have been adduced for the escalation of the Niger Delta crisis into a violent, armed, insurgency. These include, a natural response by the militants against state-sponsored violence in the region; a fallout from armed political thuggery after

electioneering seasons; a product of turf war among gangs and cult groups; and also a product of criminals taking advantage of the general state of insecurity (Omeje, 2007:59-63; Boas, 2011:119-122; Ikelegbe, 2011:125; Okwechime, 2013). An economic and political nuance to this is that the Nigerian state, as a 'rentier state', is 'grossly lacking in autonomy from vested interests, and relying on the use of force to quench all protests against its exploitative and accumulative dispositions, particularly from the oil-producing communities' (Omotola, 2006:7). It is therefore understandable that the Nigerian government responds with anxiety whenever a situation threatens its source of income, particularly the Niger Delta.

The political elite in the Niger Delta shares the blame in the making of violence in the region. Apart from arming young people for political advantage, Nafziger (2003:2) believes that these elites are never interested in promoting the rule of law, or the advancement of democratic principles, free entry into the system, or even the reduction of corruption. A just and corruption-free system would put barriers on their avenues for personal enrichment. These local elites and their foreign collaborators benefit from what Augustine Ikelegbe (2005) has aptly called the economy of conflict.

Even business entities were inevitably sucked into this atmosphere of violence and lawlessness. For example, in the late 1990s and early 2000s there was constant violence in Rivers State that involved business entities. One of these confrontations was between the youth of Choba community and the American oil servicing company Willbros based in that village.¹⁰ The same company was entangled in another situation in Ogoni where they worked for Shell. On April 30, 1990, the police and military

¹⁰ The company later divested from Nigeria

personnel attached to Willbros staff shot at protesters,¹¹ killing a youth and injuring others. But there was soon a fatal clash with the local Ogoni natives who protested the environmental damage – a youth died and others wounded (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:152-154). Moreover, Shell was at some point caught up in a scandal involving the importation of firearms for the ‘supernumerary’ police force providing them security (ICG, 2006b:6-11).

Some of the government’s primary responsibilities include to secure and protect the life and property of its citizens, to protect their right to health and of a healthy environment (Konne, 2014:185-187). But the glaring collusion between government and big business, especially in instances such as that of the arms procurement just recounted creates a siege atmosphere. It sets up a highly disproportionate power relationship between government and the multinational oil corporations on one side and Niger Delta communities on the other. Therefore, the outcome of the seeming collusion portrays a degeneration of trust and confidence and the further entrenchment of the conflict situation (Okwechime, 2013:7-10; Ekhaton, 2016).

In Odi in Bayelsa State the government responded heavy-handedly with military force, when in November 1999 some policemen were killed in a violent protest. The military operation led to the loss of lives and the destruction of much of Odi (Omeje, 2006:156-157). The wave of violence in that period turned the entire Niger Delta into a war zone, with consequence on the environment following acts of sabotage on oil installations by the insurgents. Other economic, social, and developmental activities were grounded due to insecurity, and particularly hostage-taking (ICG, 2007:7-10). Unfortunately

¹¹ They were protesting the environmental damage arising from the pipeline laying contract Willbros was executing for Shell.

when radicalised protests result in the bombing of oil facilities they only serve to exacerbate the already parlous situation, thus rendering the Niger Delta unsustainable.

The state of suspicion involving the communities, the oil companies, and the government, makes the task of establishing common grounds difficult. Not even, so-called neutral parties, are spared. A case in point is MOSOP's rejection of the UNEP environmental report on the state of the Ogoni environment as being unrepresentative and lacking popular participation (Kalu and Onoyume, 2011). Incidentally, the project was sponsored by Shell, fuelling suspicion of collusion.

The Government of Nigeria has attempted different measures to stem violence in the polity. This included the granting of amnesty to the Niger Delta militants by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 1999. This pivotal measure did for a long while reduce the level of violence from its frightening pre-amnesty heights. However, the declaration was seen on one hand as an admission of the failure of military force to resolve the violence in the region. On the other, it was the government's genuine effort to de-escalate the tension (Obi & Rustad, 2011:204). This appears to have worked as hundreds of them surrendered their weapons and renounced violence. Some observers have, however, raised issues with a blanket amnesty, arguing that,

amnesty not accompanied by penalties for the most heinous crimes and some sort of redress for victims would legitimise impunity and not contribute to the individual and communal healing needed for genuine peacebuilding (ICG, 2007:2).

It is therefore thought that the process was hastily implemented without due care to ensure that the violence was permanently resolved, and that both the government forces and the militants who committed abuses were made to account. Instead the government was motivated by the desire to see the full resumption of activities in the oil sector to curtail its dwindling income (Obi & Rustad, 2011:205). Furthermore, the

selective financial and training package given to ex-militants from certain parts of the region (especially Bayelsa and Rivers States), while ignoring the less violent youth from other parts (such as Abia and Imo States) could potentially radicalise these docile ones. Moreover, lucrative multi-million dollar contracts were given to the militant kingpins while leaving their foot soldiers (Falayi, 2014). Could that not serve as inducement to more violence, resulting from the notion that violence pays? These criticism about the effectiveness of the amnesty have been vindicate by the continued attacks on facilities in 2016, by previously unknown militants, chiefly the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA, 2016; Patience, 2016).

3.3.5 Corruption

Like many other developing, natural resource-based countries of Africa, Nigeria has been plagued by endemic corruption in private and public sectors (Shaxson 2007:202, Hope and Chikulo 2000:1), ranking 136th out of 167 countries on Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perception Index (CPI).¹² Nigerian officials are often induced by their equally corrupt-minded foreign counterparts (Daily Trust, 2010).¹³ An instance is the indictment of officials of AG Siemens of Germany and Wilbros of the United States of America, for bribing Nigerian officials (Moro, 2008:121). A court in Munich Germany found Siemens guilty, and fined it €201million. Curiously they were made to pay their fines to Germany's tax authorities,¹⁴ and not to Nigeria where the crime was committed. Thus, the Nigerian economy is made to incur a further financial loss that could have cushioned the original breach occasioned by corruption.

¹² Source: <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table>. Access 20/09/2016

¹³ See also the editorial of the Daily Trust online of 01/11/2010. Source: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201011010478.html>. Downloaded 23/12/2011

¹⁴ BBC online report of 21/11/2007, *Nigeria probes Siemens Bribe Case*. Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7105582.stm>. Accessed 02/01/2010

Moreover, such fines and the proceeds of the crime should have been directed towards rehabilitating the communities suffering the effect of degradation and not the German economy.

When corruption takes place processes are circumvented, systems compromised and structures weakened. Perpetrators can get away with non-compliance to rules and regulations, in the short term, but in the long-run it increases the cost of doing business and denies government vital revenue for its functions. Okonta & Douglas (2001: 36-61) have shown in the case of Nigeria, just as Charles Fombad (2000:234-260) did about neighbouring Cameroon, that corruption can have a dysfunctional effect on the development of a society. In Nigeria not even the judiciary, law enforcement officers (the police) are spared of this canker (Erero and Oladoyin, 2000:280-287). It is when institutions of governance have been compromised, weakened and rendered incapable of executing their function (Watts, 2004:59).

Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC),¹⁵ established to tackle the physical development of the Niger Delta region, stands as a good example of a compromised system, as it became a drain-pipe of successive governments for corrupt enrichment, to the detriment of the people it was meant to serve (Okonta & Douglas, 2001:49-54). Even its successor, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), is burdened with the accusation of lack of transparency, and of popular participation in the planning and implementation of projects. There is also the problem of ill-conception and the abandonment of projects (Uyigie & Agho, 2007: 25).

¹⁵ OMPADEC was established to tackle the physical development of the Niger Delta region following complaints of lack of amenities.

Another form of corruption has been the propping up of local political elites by foreign hegemonic powers to serve their interests. These individuals are dropped when they no longer serve these interests (Omeje, 2008:7). Consequently, such corruption which often involves the outright theft of public funds contributes to capital flight from poor African states, including Nigeria, and denies them vital income and tax. Furthermore, it stifles local investment to the benefit of foreign economies (Hope & Chikulo, 2000:23-24). This has meant in Nigeria that investment to maintain vital infrastructure in the oil industry is now drained, leaving the environment at serious risk.

The argument here is that the triple challenge of a degraded environment, an inequitable economy, and an unstable political system, are undermining the sustainability of the Niger Delta environment. These are typified by the problems associated with pollution, poverty and a fragile polity, respectively. And if these three are the tripods that prop up unsustainability in the Niger Delta, then it is apt to say that corruption is the hub that holds them together. And if unsustainability is a wheel then corruption appears to be the hub that holds the three main spokes of pollution, poverty and an aberrant polity together. Corruption remains a defiant canker eating up the system in spite of the setting up of two more agencies, the EFCC and the ICPC,¹⁶ in addition to the Code of Conduct Bureau to fight the menace.

One commendable effort of the Government of Nigeria to arrest the issues of corruption and lack of transparency was the adoption and domestication of the global Extractive Industry and Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2003. The organisation says:

The EITI Standard requires information along the extractive industry value chain from the point of extraction, to how the revenue makes its way through the government, to how it

¹⁶ EFCC stands for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, while the ICPC is the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission.

benefits the public. This includes how licenses and contracts are allocated and registered, who are the beneficial owners of those operations, what are the fiscal and legal arrangements, how much is produced, how much is paid, where are those revenues allocated, and what is the contribution to the economy, including employment.¹⁷

Armed with this universal standard, the Nigerian Extractive Industry and Transparency Initiative (NEITI) plunged into a sustained campaign for transparency and accountability in governance and resource management in Nigeria. Indeed, with backing from the NEITI Act (2007) it became the first domestic counterpart of EITI to receive legal backing.¹⁸

3.3.6 Unplanned Urbanisation

The multi-billion dollar oil industry is creating a potential social crisis in the Niger Delta, given the volatile ethnic relations in the country. This is due to the pull factor of the industry for labour into the region. Available data shows that between 1991 and 1996 the population of Niger Delta states increased in density by 15% as against the national increase of 13% (NDES, 2004:57). The impact of this growth is evidently felt more in the Niger Delta than anywhere else in the country besides Lagos (Nigeria's economic capital) due primarily to the attraction of the oil industry. For instance 'from a modest 76,000 people in 1952, the population of Port Harcourt, the chief city of the area, tripled during the oil boom [of the] 1970s and is now a sprawling conurbation of over a million inhabitants' (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:141).

The socio-economic pressure such population increase puts on the environment cannot be over-emphasised, as more people chase the scarce land for agricultural, housing and industrial purposes. Socially, it has led to the growth of urban slums particularly along the infamous Waterside areas of Port Harcourt, a place known to

¹⁷ Source: <https://eiti.org/who-we-are#aim-of-the-eiti>

¹⁸ Source: <http://www.neiti.gov.ng/index.php/aboutus/brief-history-of-neiti>

breed criminal elements (ICG, 2007). Furthermore, pollution increases have the potential (in future, if not now) of disturbing the prevailing social dynamics between natives and the new-comers, a tension that is prevailing in other parts of the country such as Kano and Jos. It is situation which raises the spectre of what Okonta and Douglas (2001:142) have called 'A war of all against all', in which youths fight against their elders, community against community, and communities against the government and oil companies.

Notwithstanding concerns, some commentators believe population growth and urbanisation is good for the environment. They argue that, 'from the perspective of sustainable land use and habitat protection, the more that growing numbers of people can be persuaded to herd themselves into a relatively small areas of urban land, the better for the environment' (Lynas, 2011:134). However, such potential benefit has to be weighed against the challenges.

In summary, the impact of pollution from the oil activities has not only been felt on the bio-physical arena, it has also impacted on the economic, social and political arenas. The ecosystem has been destroyed, people's means of livelihood truncated, and life expectancy cut short. It is even tricky to conjecture its impact on the cultural fabric of the communities, but suffice it to say that oil and gas exploration has created upheaval on that score as well. Omeje (2006:55-56) records incidents of desecration of sacred spaces, killing of totemic animals and symbols, invasion of the privacy of local people by oil workers and promotion of prostitution. This level of invisible damage leads to deeper psychological trauma on the people, and has angered communities. It also creates the kind of excuse used for retaliatory sabotage of oil installations.

3.4 The Response of Major Stakeholders to these Problems

Cognisant of the issues affecting the sustainability of the Niger Delta environment, it will be useful to examine a few actions taken by the four major stakeholders – the Niger Delta community, the oil companies, multilateral institutions, and the government – in response. Within the community group are the various ethnic and tribal assemblages, their respective socio-cultural pressure groups, and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) advocating on their behalf. Representing oil companies are various multinational oil companies (MNOCs), their local counterparts, and their contractors and agents. The government and its institutions are in three tiers – the Local, State, and Federal governments. And then there are other interests such as the UN and its organs and agencies, international NGOs including religious orders, and foreign governments. All of these have at one point or the other and in one form or the other intervened or responded to the issues of the Niger Delta.

3.4.1 Community-Activist Response

The response of oil-producing communities to the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region has been multi-dimensional, taking the forms of political activism, legal challenge, communal mobilization, public awareness, and protest action. Their protestations began as petitions, representations, and complaints to MNOCs and the State, through their representatives. When that did not get the required attention, they organized open rallies, and also the picketing of government and MNOCs offices (Joab-Peterside, 2007:4; Ukeje, 2001:346). Over time the peaceful demonstrations metamorphosed into an armed resistance waged, supposedly on the people's behalf, by a rash of Niger Delta militant groups. This latter phase has included economic sabotage, pipeline vandalism, and outright oil theft, otherwise known as bunkering.

It must be noted however, that the origin of militancy has been attributed to other causes besides the legitimate struggle of the Niger Delta people. Some commentators believe that the Niger Delta political elite armed their unemployed youths to help them wrest political power (Boas, 2011:119-122), while others think it is sponsored by oil thieves who use the cover of violence to carry out their flourishing illegal bunkering enterprise. Jostling for space and control in this economy of violence were cult boys¹⁹ and gangsters and other foot soldiers (Joab-Peterside, 2007:11-13). Although it is hard to trace the cases of militancy and bunkering to any community-led action, yet the communities' attitude gives the impression that they condone it, if nothing else, as it presumably hurts their detractors (the government and oil companies).

Niger Delta communities have grown in their political awareness and mobilization to fight their cause. They have consequently organized themselves into a number of socio-cultural cum political organizations to give voice to their cause. Prominent among these are the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), and the Ijaw National Council (INC). Even their traditional rulers banded themselves under the Traditional Rulers of Oil Minerals Producing Communities of Nigeria (TROMPCON). These groups helped to raise the profile of the struggle and indeed internationalized it through their leaders such as the late activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, using his contacts abroad (Wiwa, 2000:101).

High on the demands of the communities included access to a greater share of the oil wealth (popularly known as resource-control), political self-determination for the region, and in the time being, access to the decision making processes at the highest

¹⁹ Cult boys are locally known in Nigeria to be members of clandestine organisations of mostly young people with a group identity bound by oaths of allegiance to the group. Quite often they are violent university campus fraternities. But in recent years they have metamorphosed into all kinds of youth groups with allegiance to various politicians (Boas, 2011; Joab-Peterside 2007).

political and economic levels, to deal with the issues of marginalization. It is the denial of such accesses, and sometimes the extension of privileges to a few, that is responsible for the spate of resentment, protests and then resistance (Omeje, 2007:10).

Supporting these communities in advocacy is a rash of non-governmental organizations, including well-known international environmental campaigners such as the Friends of the Earth in Nigeria (FoEN). FoEN, in addition to campaigning for justice, have even campaigned for an end to new fossil fuel finds, arguing that such should be left in the soil.²⁰

3.4.2 The Response of International Multilateral Institutions

Multilateral organisations²¹, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations bodies, have periodically published reports on Nigeria, that indicate a prevalence of poverty, disease, and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. But the study we will give attention to is that conducted in 2011 by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) in the Ogoniland. It found Shell negligent and culpable, among other things, for the incidents of oil-related environmental degradation in its

²⁰ Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) in November 2009 forwarded a proposal to the Nigerian Government requesting that new oil finds should be left in the soil. See <http://eraction.org/publications/presentations/leaveoilproposal.pdf>. Accessed 27/05/2014.

²¹ For a long time it seemed that Nigeria was left to solve its own environmental problems. Calls by Niger Delta people for international support appeared to have gone unheeded. However, the killing of Mr Kenule Saro-Wiwa, the playwright, environmental activist and campaigner for Ogoni people's rights, opened the Nigerian government to global condemnation. Also the growing strategic importance of the vast mineral wealth of the gulf of Guinea to major world powers such as the United States (US) has helped to raise the profile of the Niger Delta region (Ellis, 2003). With the unpredictable nature of Middle East politics and the instability associated with its oil supplies, Western powers have come to realise that their interest will be best served if the 'new gulf' is secure (Peel, 2011: 54). So far, despite the problems in the Niger Delta the gulf of Guinea has lent itself as a credible alternative to the crisis prone Persian Gulf as a major shipping and trading route. The two Gulf wars and the on-going US-led counter-terrorism measures in that region have only exacerbated relations between the West and the Arab world (Ellis, 2003 and Omotola, 2006).

operational sites, which resulted from the lack of proper maintenance of its oil facilities, and the abandonment of ageing pipelines.

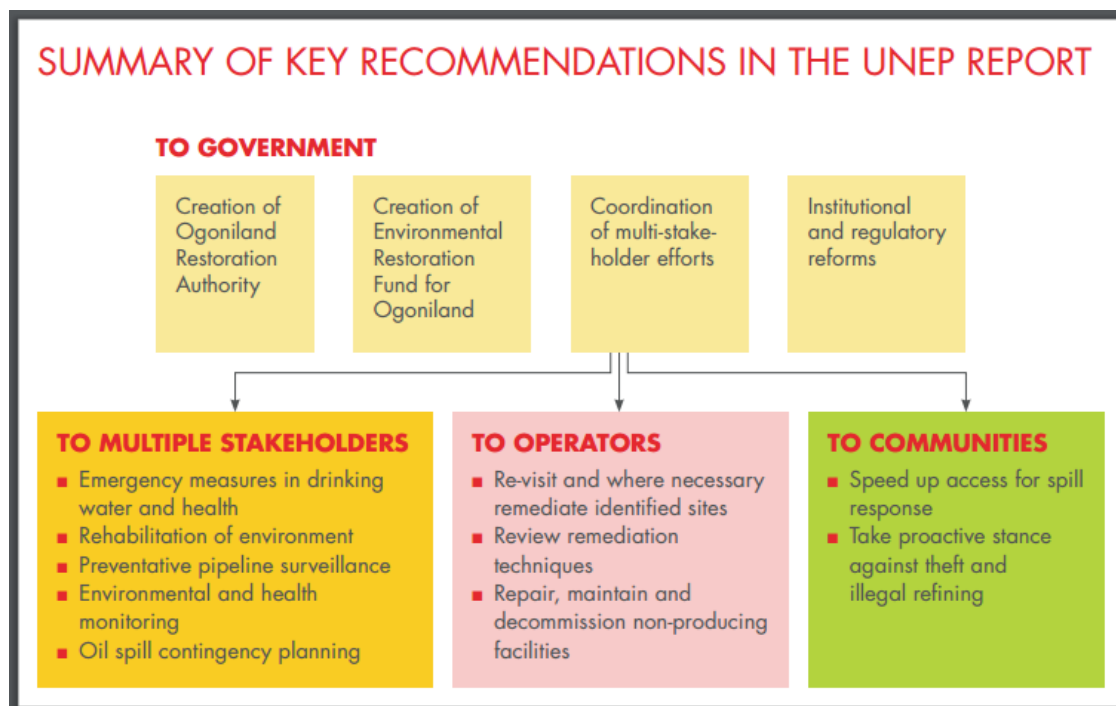
The UNEP report condemned the adverse effect of the growing number of rogue artisanal refineries that employ crude means to extract and refine stolen oil from rusty facilities. As these opportunistic invaders prey on badly maintained oil installations products are spilled, creating massive patches of wasteland and health hazards to the people and the environment. The report goes on to list other negative outcomes of these illegal refineries to include deforestation, which exposes the area to erosion, and the pollution of the soil and ground water. It (the report) further argues that,

Although the impacts of each illegal refinery are small, the cumulative effect risks an environmental catastrophe, the costs of which would far outweigh the short-term economic benefits derived. Unless artisanal refining of crude oil is brought to a swift end through effective regulatory action, in conjunction with developmental and educational initiatives, it has the capacity to cause further serious damage to the ecosystem and livelihoods of the coastal communities in Ogoniland and beyond (UNEP, 2011: 104).

The other issue that the UNEP report raises is that of national security, wondering why the government and its security apparatus have not been able to arrest the growing problem of illegal refineries. This may not be unconnected to the scale of collusion of people in government. The case of the court-martialled naval Generals illustrates this level of collaboration between state officials and the criminal gangs. Peel (2001: 58-59) cites this example to buttress the point of how corruption has incapacitated the regulatory and security organs of government.

The following are the summary of key recommendations of the UNEP report:

Figure 3.1: A Summary of Key UNEP Recommendations [Courtesy: Shell Nigeria]²²



After carrying out a region-wide study, comprising five case studies, the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) concluded that there have been multilevel failings cutting across the attitude of government, the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta and the communities. Despite differences of emphasis, the case studies leading to their research reveal a consistent thread of concerns. These include a continuing failure by Shell and SPDC to operate in the Niger Delta fully according to robust international social and environmental standards; severe pollution of air, land and water, with disastrous impacts on health and livelihoods; inadequate inclusion of communities in decisions affecting their lives; a failure to dialogue respectfully,

²² Available at: <http://s03.static-shell.com/content/dam/shell-new/local/country/nga/downloads/pdf/unep/summary-recommendations-unep-report-july-2014.pdf>. Downloaded 29/09/2016

address critical needs and maintain trust; short-termism and lack of vision (ECCR, 2010: 7).

Since 1990 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has published the annually a Human Development Index (HDI). This is a composite measure that contains the progress, or otherwise, that countries have made with regards to certain indices, including health, education and income. In 2012 it ranked Nigeria below the African regional average and at 156th out of 187 countries globally, and 152nd out of 188 countries in 2015.²³ Thus, despite improvements in recent years, Nigeria has remained at the bottom ranking of human development despite its vast natural wealth (UNDP, 2016:4). But within Nigeria the outlook even gets bleaker for certain geographic regions, and the Niger Delta is probably worst of all because of the terrain and the added environmental despoliation (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:256; Agbonifo, 2015:89). Nevertheless, other regions like northern Nigeria have similar stories of severe underdevelopment.

One more significant step taken by the United Nations, with implication for the Niger Delta, relates to its support for the call for a proportion of oil to be left in the ground. The UN suggests that the oil and gas industry should leave three quarters of their discovered reserves in the ground. This they believe would help reduce carbon emissions and thus ameliorate the impact of climate change. Christiana Figueres (2014), UN climate chief, agrees with this argument saying that “Three-quarters of the

²³ See <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html> (last accessed 25/08/2012), and http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/NGA.pdf, last accessed 12/05/2017.

fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground.” She urges that “The fossil fuels we do use must be utilized sparingly and responsibly.”²⁴

3.4.3 Oil Industry Response

The oil industry’s response to the perennial accusations against them is both of humbling admittance of failures and of robust rebuttal. Shell being the main operator in the area, and indeed the whole country, focus will be mainly on their activities. The company claims that although it has not been producing oil in Ogoni since being forced out from Ogoniland in 1993, it has

initiated action to address all of the recommendations directed to it in the UNEP report. In some cases further progress is dependent on outstanding actions to be taken by other stakeholders...SPDC is committed to delivering the UNEP recommendations directed to it as operator of the SPDC Joint Venture and continues to work with the Federal Government of Nigeria, UNEP and its joint venture partners on taking implementation of the UNEP report forward (Shell, 2011)²⁵

Despite these claims of working to resolve issues, there is need for sincerity and for proactive action that is not solely hinged on any external report, but one that arises from a robust, internal, self-regulating, and transparent mechanism, that conforms to international standards. Even so, for sustainability, the company also reiterated the views of the UNEP report that

treating the problem of environmental contamination within Ogoniland merely as a technical clean-up exercise will ultimately lead to failure. Ensuring long-term sustainability is a much bigger challenge – one that will require coordinated and collaborative action from all stakeholders. This must include putting an end to the widespread pipeline sabotage, crude oil theft and illegal refining that are the main causes of environmental damage in Ogoniland and the wider Niger Delta today²⁶

Again Shell appeals to extraneous factors as being mainly responsible for the cases of pollution. This is despite that numerous reports, including those commissioned by it,

²⁴ Source: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-03/un-tells-oil-gas-industry-to-leave-fuel-in-ground.html>. Accessed 27/05/2014

²⁵ Source: <http://www.shell.com.ng/environment-society/environment-tpkg/our-response.html>. Accessed 29/09/2016

²⁶ Source: <http://www.shell.com.ng/environment-society/our-response.html>. Accessed 15/01/2016

indicate that their operation, which has been far below their own industry standards, is responsible for exacerbating the problems if not creating them (UNEP (2011:12; ECCR, 2010:77).²⁷ Where it admits responsibility, Shell attributes the non-remediation of affected sites and the non-maintenance of facilities to attacks on its staff and facilities, leading to the abandonment of such affected areas (Shell, Nigeria, 2012). UNEP (2011:96) agrees in part that the lack of maintenance of these facilities could be attributed to Shell being forced out its operations in Ogoni since 1993, leaving the oil facilities vulnerable.

Community-activists and other commentators however counter such claims with the argument that it was Shell's dereliction that created the situation in the first place, resulting in the people's uncompromising reaction (ERA, 2000; Peel, 2011). It is noteworthy that the company had hitherto maintained that most of the oil spills are a result of sabotage by vandals until some court verdicts against Shell, such as the ones determined in the UK and the Netherlands (Pigrau, 2013:5-6). Could this explain why they became active about cleaning up and remediating pollution sites?

More improvement has come in the area of gas flaring. Shell claims that it has stopped gas flaring by 60% between 2002 and 2011. This represents 'from over 0.6 billion cubic feet a day (bcf/d) to about 0.2 bcf/d, and flaring intensity has almost halved in the same period from about 0.80Mscfd/bbl to 0.45Mscf/bbl' (Shell, 2012b). Oil companies have argued that gas flaring, which were hitherto accepted industry practice, and

²⁷ ECCR notes 'A continuing failure to operate fully according to robust international social and environmental standards: In respect of gas flaring, oil spills, pollution control and response, environmental rehabilitation, the conduct of social and environmental impact assessments, and the delivery of developmental benefits to local communities, company operations fall far short of both the letter and the spirit of best practice. Severe pollution of air, land and water, with disastrous impacts on health, livelihoods and poverty: The deterioration of living conditions as demonstrated by a range of socio-economic and health indicators and reports during the decades when Shell and SPDC have operated in the Delta show how badly their environmental management practices have impacted on human wellbeing' (ECCR, 2010:77).

other incidents of pollution were largely due to poorer technology in use since the 1950s, compared to the advanced versions currently in use. But with better technology this valuable resource is presently being harnessed for better economic use in the light of growing local and international demand (Shell, 2012b).

But, why flare gas in the light of its economic benefit? Shell also blames it on the complicated joint venture partnerships with the government occasioned by bureaucratic bottlenecks that delay and hamstring investment and operations (ECCR, 2010:79). Dwindling oil revenue may also be responsible for government delays. However, it was also cheaper to burn the gas than spend on the cost of technology, and there is the notion of a tacit government support in maintaining the status quo in production levels (apparently for revenue reasons), whilst overlooking its implication on gas flaring.

On a different note, Mutiu Sunmonu, the then country Chair and Managing Director of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) raised alarm on the scale of this oil theft, suggesting that it is 'not petty theft undertaken by desperate individuals struggling to make a living. These are well-funded crimes that may be connected with an international syndicate (Shell, Nigeria, 2012a: 2).' Michael Peel corroborates these views, citing reports that indicate that about six hundred thousand barrels of oil per day, nearly a third of Nigeria's daily oil production, is stolen by an assortment of local and foreign interests (Peel, 2011:15). He supports his case with the instance of two Nigerian Navy Admirals who were court-martialled in 2005 in connection with the disappearance of two detained foreign tankers for alleged involvement in oil theft. Peel nonetheless points to the involvement of Niger Delta militants in this illegal business. Dokubo Asari, the leader of the militant Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force

(NDPVF), who owns one of such crude refineries, justifies his action with the claim that they are legitimately taking what belongs to them (Peel, 2011:15-20).

Controversially Shell also responded to threats, at the height of the period of insecurity in the 1990s, by hiring both private and state security services to protect its interests, leading to face-off with local communities. Some of these security operatives are known to be ill-equipped and often overzealous in their operations, leading to casualties (Ukeje, 2011:94). This scenario is not far-fetched in a context where the oil corporations wield enormous influence on a government desperately dependent on its oil revenue (Ako, 2015:4; Ekhaton, 2016:48). Mark Tran writes that a Shell official, Emmanuel Etomi, admits that Shell's operations:

sometimes feeds conflict by the way we award contracts, gain access to land, and deal with community representatives; how ill-equipped our security team is to reduce conflict; and how drastically conflict reduces the effect of our community development programme (Tran, 2004).²⁸

This growing expectation on oil companies to increase their role in community development (CD) is not uncommon in a context of a weak, and, sometimes, absent state presence (Ukeje, 2011:94). Consequently, oil companies are responding and improving their corporate social responsibility (CSR) with Shell embarking on a number of projects, including building schools, health projects, providing clean water, and giving educational scholarships to local communities (Omeje, 2007:89; Igbuku, 2012:5-8). Shell argues, however, that it is the responsibility of the government to provide these amenities to citizens, while it (Shell) pays taxes as a responsible corporate citizen. Simon Buerk, a company official, emphasised that Shell's role is limited to

²⁸ Mark Tran wrote this in a Guardian (of London) newspaper article "*Shell May have to Leave Nigeria*" of June 11, 2004. Mr Emmanuel Etomi, was at the time of publication, the Community Development Manager for the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Nigeria. Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2004/jun/11/oilandpetrol.money>. Accessed 04/10/2011

offering support where needed, ‘the government and local communities must take the lead’ (Tran, 2014).²⁹

Although the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) accedes to this position it, believes nonetheless that it is a mark of good CSR for Shell to plough back into the area where they make their money. Actually, ECCR argues, ‘the human right to clean water is inalienable. Any industry whose operations impair that right has an immediate duty to remedy the situation fully’ (ECCR, 2010:74). In essence Shell violates the human right of the Niger Delta people when its operation infringes on their right to health and a healthy environment (Konne, 2014:185-187). The report of a security study by WAC Global Services,³⁰ commissioned by Shell came to a similar conclusion that it is to Shell’s best interest to empower its host communities.

The impression Shell gives by all the studies and researches it sponsors is that of an entity desirous to help solve Niger Delta’s environmental crisis. However, it is curious that over the years no serious action seems to have been taken to ameliorate the situation – most of the oil spill sites in the Niger Delta remained unsolved, the cry against marginalisation and underdevelopment grew louder and continued unheeded, and the security situation worsened over time. It rather gives the impression that the series of panels, committees, studies, and so on, were geared towards buying time. Or could it be an example of what Oronto & Douglas (2001:85) think is a deceptive ‘environmentally friendly’ image the company gives about itself?

²⁹ Buerk cited one of such assistance to local communities to include the company’s ‘partnership with USAID to develop capacity in agriculture, health and business enterprise, and with Africare (a non-governmental organisation) for reducing deaths from malaria’ (Tran, 2004).

³⁰ WAC Global Services is a Nigeria-based specialist group in conflict resolution. Shell commissioned it in 2003 to carry out a survey that will help it (Shell) to develop an effective peace and security strategy. The ninety three page survey came out with scathing criticism of Shell’s level of social responsibility to its host communities and predicts that the company would likely pull-out of the delta. That prophecy was fulfilled when Shell was forced to quit its operation in Ogoni land.

3.4.4 The Response of the Nigerian Government

The response of the Nigerian government to the environmental crisis has been multi-sectoral in nature, covering socio-political, economic, military, developmental, and legal and regulatory dimensions. Some specific core actions will be reviewed under these categories.

3.4.4.1 Socio-political (Carrot-and-Stick) Approach

The government has taken some major political steps in responding to problems. Already the elevation of environmental matters from departmental to ministerial level shows the government's seriousness in tackling the problem. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency was transformed into the Federal Ministry of Environment with a substantive minister. In 2006 the government established the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) to specifically tackle the issues of oil spill.³¹

Following the UNEP report the government also set up the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HPRP) led by NOSDRA. Thus, they brought together various departments and agencies of the Ministry of the Environment. Their task was essentially the remediation of all pollution sites in the Niger Delta, and also the

³¹ The agency on its website says:

The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) was established in 2006 as an institutional framework to co-ordinate the implementation of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) for Nigeria in accordance with the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC 90) to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Since its establishment, the Agency has been intensely occupied with ensuring compliance with environment legislation in the Nigerian Petroleum Sector. The Agency embarks on Joint Investigation Visits, ensures the remediation of impacted sites and monitors oil spill drill exercises and facilities inspection.

It has set up Zonal Offices in Port Harcourt, Warri, and Uyo all in the Niger-Delta region where much of oil exploration and production in Nigeria is carried out and there are also zonal offices in Lagos, Kaduna and Akure.

NOSDRA is currently liaising with relevant stakeholders in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry to evolve practical methods of environmental management to cope with the dynamics of the Petroleum Sector.

Available at: <http://www.nosdra.org.ng/profile.html>. Accessed 15/01/2016

provision of alternative social infrastructure to ameliorate the people's suffering. For example, they were to provide such facilities to Ogoni communities such as portable drinking water.³²

Another socio-political carrot extended by the Nigerian state to the Niger Delta placate their unending cry of marginalisation was the creation of more states for them. This is especially as the problem of nepotism associated with ethnicity and tribalism has remained endemic in the Nigerian political landscape. As early as the 1960s when the nation was fighting for independence from British rule, concerns were raised by these minority tribes that they will be underrepresented and dominated if lumped with the majority Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba tribes (Emeseh, 2011:67). That was resolved subsequently by a number of measures, including the creation of more states from the original three regions at independence, an action that has led to the thirty-six state structure bequeathed by the military-dictated 1999 constitution. Yet the agitation for more states keeps growing, the underlying persuasion in the Niger Delta being a greater access to the nation's oil revenue. This is popularly known in Nigeria as resource control (Ako, 2015:3).

The political appointments of Niger Delta indigenes to key oil-related ministerial and corporate portfolios gives the impression of attempts by the Nigerian state to placate the region after years of marginalisation in that vital oil and gas sector. Prof Tam David-West (Rivers State) was the first from the area to be appointed Petroleum Minister (1984-85) by the short-lived military junta of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. Interestingly the same Muhammadu Buhari (presently, a civilian President) has

³² Premium Times (2014) *Nigerian government begins implementation of UNEP report on Ogoniland, says NOSDRA*. February 5, 2014. Source: <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/154639-nigerian-government-begins-implementation-unep-report-ogoniland-says-nosdra.html>. Accessed 15/01/2016

appointed another Niger Delta indigene Dr Ibe Kachikwu (Delta State) in 2015, first as the Group Managing Director (GMD) of the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and subsequently as Minister of State for Petroleum.

In between, the above appointments there have been at least four other petroleum ministers through the 1990s and the 2000s appointed from this same region.³³ Indeed Nigeria's first female minister of petroleum and incidentally OPEC's first female President Dr Mrs Diezeani Alison-Madueke is also from the Niger Delta (Rivers State). It is therefore intriguing that despite these high-profile appointments there is continued agitation in the Niger Delta. Could it be because these appointments do not address the main issues of degradation, injustice and marginalisation that agitate the minds of the people?

3.4.4.2 Military Response

As the Niger Delta environmental crisis gradually degenerated from peaceful 'leaf-carrying' protest to an armed conflict in the 1990s, the situation was exacerbated by the government's disproportionate use of force to quell the protests. The Nigerian state was roundly condemned locally and internationally for this overbearing approach which led to the destruction of lives and property in Odi, Bayelsa State, and Umuechem, Ogoni and Choba in Rivers State, especially at the heights of the conflict in the 1990s and to the mid-2000s.

The spate of violent conflicts in the region escalated with the proliferation of illegal arms in the hands of militant groups led by the Movement for the Emancipation of the

³³ Others are Chief Don Etiebet from Akwa Ibom (1993-5), Dan Etete from Bayelsa (1995-8), and Dr Edmund Daukoru (2005-7).

Niger Delta (MEND).³⁴ Indeed, the ‘capacity of MEND to attack strategic oil infrastructure and kidnap oil workers otherwise protected by state security exposed the weakness and capacity problems of the military and police forces’ (Ukiwo, 2011:24). In the end the government was forced to call a truce and offered amnesty to the militants if they agreed to lay down their arms. Thus the amnesty became the main political tool to bring peace when the military option failed.

3.4.4.3 Legal and Regulatory Response:

With the advent of colonialism the British common laws supplanted customary laws, and became the instrument for the governance of the environment. Such laws and institutions currently governing the environment and the extractive industry include,

- 1)Petroleum Act (Cap P10, LFN 2004)
- 2)Land Use Act (Cap L5, LFN 2004)
- 3)Associated Gas Re-Injection Act - CAP. A25, L.F.N, 2004
- 4)Environmental Impact Assessment Act - CAP. E12 L.F.N. 2004
- 5)Hydrocarbon Oil Refineries Act - CAP H5 L.F.N. 2004
- 6)Oil Pipelines Act - CAP. O7 L.F.N. 2004
- 7)Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund Act - CAP. P14 L.F.N. 2004
- 8)Petroleum Technology Development Fund Act - CAP. P15 L.F.N. 2004
- 9)National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, (NOSDRA Establishment) Act, 2006
- 10)Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Act, 2007
- 11) Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act - CAP. F10 L.F.N. 2004 (Repealed by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, NESREAA Act 2007)
- 12) Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act, 2010
- 13) Minerals and Mining Act- CAP M12 L.F.N. 2004 [Repealed by the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act, 2011]

³⁴ MEND stands for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.

Nigeria is also a signatory to a number of international instruments on the environment (Ojo and Gaskiya, 2003:620). These include the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climatic Change (1992), and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN Guideline 1996).

The significant ingredient common to most of Nigeria's legal instruments mentioned above is that they expropriated the ownership of land and its resources from its customary owners (individuals, families, lineages, and communities) and vested them on the state (Omeje, 2006:36), initially the British Crown, and then the Nigeria State. In this respect, the 1945 Mineral Ordinance provides in Section 1 that 'The entire property and control of all minerals and mineral oil, in, under, or upon any land in Nigeria, and of all rivers, streams, and water courses throughout Nigeria, is and shall be vested in the crown' (Omoruyi, 2000:2). This principle which draws from the British Common Law states that the person who owns the land owns all that is on it, has enraged the Niger Delta people (Ajai, 2012:93).

The Nigerian state reinforced this position with post-independence laws (Okonta & Douglas, 2001: 38-39). The economic and socio-political impact of these laws can be summarised in the fact that 'it turned the people who live in the host mining communities into squatters in their own ancestral homes' (Muritala, 2012:116). In the light of the Niger Delta people's relentless call for the control of resources in their region, there have been calls, as a part of the solution, for all unfriendly legislations to be repealed (ERA, 2000; Okonta and Douglas, 2001; and Moro, 2008).

On a brighter note, most of Nigeria's environmental laws were actually regulatory in nature, primarily geared towards conserving and protecting the environment, however the outcome has been poor. The problem has been succinctly captured by Joseph Akinkugbe Adelegan, saying:

Regulations are the most common approach to environmental problems. *Standards, bans, permits* and *quotas* are often favoured by policymakers because they promise certainty of outcome – without costly monitoring and enforcement, however, this promise may not be realized...experience from Nigerian environmental policies and implementation has shown that the traditional command-and-control system to pollution abatement had not produced the desired result both economic and environmental wise (Adelegan, c.2004:2).

Thus, poor regulation has worsened the state of the environment across Nigeria despite the existence of numerous legal and regulatory instruments (Robinson, 2013:2). It could also be that these instruments are no longer fit for purpose, needing revising, or as it is often the case, the agencies charged with their enforcement are ill-equipped and ineffective as Kayode Soremekun (2011:106) suggests. Many times it is a function of both, further undermined by undue pecuniary interests that override the primary concern for the environment (Soremekun, 2011:106). That seems to explain the reason why although regulation had the potential of setting the right standards for action and to pose as deterrent to would-be polluters, yet it is probably for the sake of the government avoiding costs that it is preferred against other measures such as remediation. Its deterrent factor is also quite suspect as the oil corporations for instance seem to have preferred paying the meagre fines for gas flaring to stopping the act entirely (Idemudia, 2011:175).

Could the above scenario have contributed to the people's seeming apathy to take ownership of the environmental protection and conservation policies of the government, having lost their right to their land and its resources? The current state of disempowerment has the potential of generating a kind of carefree attitude towards

the environment as people feel they do not have a stake in the benefits accruing from oil. This seems to fuel the acts of desperation that led to instances of pipeline vandalism that has led to countless loss of lives and property in the past (Muritala, 2012:117). Nevertheless, it is the people who will still be hurt when for example there is a destruction of oil pipelines by oil thieves, just because they simply do not care.

3.4.4.4 Economic and Developmental Response

Under-development in the Niger Delta in the midst of the enormous oil wealth derived from its territory has earlier been described as a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. Recognising the seriousness of the situation and the agitations of the Niger Delta people the government was forced to devise means of providing the much needed developmental infrastructure. One of these solutions, as earlier mentioned, is the formula for sharing the revenue that accrues from mineral wealth. But the proportion that goes to the communities continued to be reviewed downwards as the central government's share burgeoned. From a fifty-fifty sharing formula between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the regions, to the present civilian dispensation of 87% to the federal government and 13% to the states (ICG 113:20-21, Omeje, 2006:36-37; Ekhaton, 2016:55).³⁵

An early major attempt at tackling the region's developmental needs was the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961, and then the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992. Both initiatives eventually collapsed without achieving their mandates of bringing development to the region. Engobo Emeseh believes their demise was due to 'factors

³⁵ The government's 'oil revenue as a percentage of total national revenue (budgetary revenue) has also grown from a less than 25 per cent average in the 1960s to an average of more than 70 per cent from the 1970s through the 1990s' (Omeje, 2006:35).

such as their very broad mandates, unclear objectives, inadequate funding, politicization of the contract awarding processes and corruption (Emeseh 2011:69).

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 is the latest attempt by the government to tackle issues of development in the area. Again it seems to have been given a broad mandate, with 'the mission of facilitating the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful.' Already, a decade after it was established, the commission seems to fall behind achieving its stated mandate, 'as no significant development has taken place in the Niger Delta' (Emeseh, 2011:69).

Curiously NDDC is, comparatively, receiving far more funding than its predecessors. In 2015 Shell claims that its operated ventures contributed the following sums:

\$145.1 million (Shell share \$62.3 million) to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as required by law

\$50.4 million (Shell share \$15.4 million) was directly invested by the SPDC JV and SNEPCo in social investment projects (Shell).³⁶

Such contribution to the NDDC raises questions about how prudent the funds accruing to the commission are being invested, calling for a close scrutiny of how oil royalties and compensations are handled, from the local level to the national level. It is also to deal with the security problem that the government initiated the amnesty program aimed at demobilizing all non-state armed actors. However, it needs to be revisited in the light of implementation issues.

³⁶ See: <http://www.shell.com.ng/aboutshell/media-centre/annual-reports-and-publications/economic-contribution.html>

3.5 Remediating the Situation

To remedy the above situation will require a multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, and composite stakeholder involvement, as Babatunde Ahonsi (2011:32) suggests. Community participation is however key to stemming feelings of marginalisation and the acts of desperation, such as bunkering, they engender (NDES 2004:94). In addition to the comprehensive action expected from the respective stakeholders (*Figure 3.1*), both Omeje (2006:176) and Ahonsi (2011:32) advocate a holistic approach including the review of obsolete and offending laws, grassroots economic empowerment, human capital development, demobilisation of all militia groups, securing oil infrastructure and personnel, action on environmental remediation, good governance, and infrastructural development.

Empowering the people should include the equitable distribution of the oil resources to ensure that the benefit trickles down to the people at the grassroots, particularly the youth. Oil well ownership should be reviewed to favour people from the oil-producing communities. The suggestion here is that wealthy elite-custodians of oil the wealth allocated to communities would see themselves as holding this commonwealth in trust for their people, and consequently make attempts to trickle the profit downward to the people. These suggestions are only possible if the laws appropriating natural resources to the federal government's control are amended to allow greater community participation and regional control. Under such arrangement, akin to the independence-era constitution, the regions will be required to pay fifty percent tax on the resources to the centre (Ekhaton, 2016:55). Otherwise, a hybrid arrangement is suggested here, to allow for private-public (citizens-government) partnership to exploit the resources.

Actually communities can be empowered to form cooperatives to bid for oil contracts. There should be established a special fund/institution drawn from environmental levies and fines, and from the excess crude account³⁷ to help them access funding for this purpose. In a *Vanguard* newspaper article of October 17, 2015, Sunny Akumah (2015) wrote that the Federal Government was in the process of licensing modular refineries³⁸ to boost local fuel supply and to diversify the oil economy from reliance on crude oil export. Actually, oil bunkering would be a thing of the past if local communities were empowered by government to establish such small-scale refineries. Local expertise in the illegal refining business will be properly utilised in a controlled and regulated atmosphere.

Redressing injustices would also require domesticating and respecting citizens' human and environmental rights enshrined in international statutes such as the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although Nigeria is a signatory to these, there are still issues related with the implementation of its provisions. Article 24 of the African Charter guarantees the 'right to a generally satisfactory environment.' Bamidele Aturu believes that these provisions are foundational for the pursuance and defence of environmental rights. However, they are not explicit in Chapter 4 of the present (1999) Constitution which guarantees other fundamental rights. Nevertheless, they can be implied under the right to life section of the constitution. The implication, therefore, is that 'it is impossible for a

³⁷ The excess crude account is the fund that accrues from the variation between the anticipated price of crude oil in the federal budget and the actual market. The former is underquoted to allow for oil price fluctuations in the international market.

³⁸ Modular refineries are small-scale prefabricated refining plants with capacity for as little as 1000 barrels of oil per day (Akumah, 2015). According to Kayode Adeoye (2016), 'The key advantages of a modular refinery lie in its size, cost differential and flexibility. It is constructed in a controlled environment and properly tested before being shipped out. It is relatively easier to fabricate and erect. Also, when an area becomes unsuitable for business, it can be disassembled and reassembled faster'.

citizen to approach the courts to seek redress for environmental pollution or other deleterious activities of individuals or corporate entities on the environment on grounds that his or her fundamental right has been infringed upon' (Aturu, 2000:100). However, Rhuks Ako (2015:5-7) has illustrated with some court cases that, despite these challenges, are surmountable from a rights-based approach.

Nonetheless, Aturu spots a lacuna in Sections 16(2) and 17(2) of the 1999 constitution upon which to pray the courts to protect the environment based on the 'common good' principle. Simply put the two sections demand that the State must not act in any way as to work against the common good of the people. Still, Aturu calls for a review of the Constitution, with a view to enshrine those missing provisions, in order to guarantee the people a right to a clean, healthy and satisfactory environment.

Amnesty International strengthens that argument, connecting environmental rights and human rights, by bringing into focus the landmark decision of the African Commission of 2002, which found Nigeria in violation of its people's rights as guaranteed under the African Charter. The Commission charges that:

[D]espite its obligation to protect persons against interferences in the enjoyment of their rights, the government of Nigeria facilitated the destruction of the Ogoniland. Contrary to its Charter obligations and despite such internationally established principles, the Nigerian Government has given the green light to private actors, and the oil companies in particular to devastatingly affect the well-being of the Ogonis (Amnesty, 2009:23).

Particularly, the Commission called on the Government of Nigeria to do everything necessary to protect the wellbeing of Ogoni people and their environment, and to ensure that those whose rights have been violated are adequately compensated. The challenge is that such compensations are usually paltry (Fekumo, 2001:15; Ako, 2015:6), with calculation that 'do not appear to take into consideration the long-term implications of loss of access to critical livelihood resources' (Amnesty, 2009:24). This is

worse when a community has suffered neglect and long-term impact of oil-related degradation as was the case with the Ebubu community for over forty years after the original spill (Amnesty, 2009:30). Latter cases such as *Gbemre v. Shell*, *Wiwa v. Shell*, and *Akpan v. Shell* challenging the actions of the oil companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria from a human rights-based approach have achieved varying degrees of success (Ako, 2015:5-7). However, in addition to other benefits these cases serve, they are indications that Niger Delta communities were growing in confidence, and changing the narrative of violence and self-help associated with the region in preference of the rule of law.

As earlier mentioned the cooperation of local communities must be sought to make any suggested changes participatory and enduring. The UNEP report recommended in *Figure 3.1* that the communities should enable access to all oil spill sites, and to discourage nefarious individuals from tampering with critical infrastructure. Such demand can only be met if the communities are properly educated and mobilised to understand the benefits of playing their part, and the dangers of not doing so.

3.6 Conclusion:

This chapter has examined the nature of oil-related degradation suffered in the Niger Delta and the underlying causes, and the actions taken by the various stakeholders in response to the underlying economic and socio-political catalysts of these problems. However, these actions have not been totally successful in resolving the environmental crisis. For example the lack of effective coordination of the various government efforts leaves them patchy and ineffective. Also the underfunding and the lack of capacity of regulatory agencies have undermined their ability to function and to curb the spate of pollution in the oil fields.

The question that needs answering is whether sustainability can be achieved in the Niger Delta without due attention given to the fundamental issues creating the problems in the first place. It has been noted in this chapter, however, that both the government and the oil companies, especially Shell, are beginning to take action to resolve environmental issues. They realise that peace and security are indispensable to meaningful progress. But such actions must be accelerated to avoid a relapse to the dark days of violence.

On the whole, peaceful coexistence is a *sine qua non* in all organised, civil society. As a result the need for an enabling environment for sustainability to thrive cannot be overemphasised. Oil bearing communities would need to give peace a chance, by trusting the other stakeholders to keep their word. They also need to take responsibility for the actions of their youth and ensure that no room is given to economic saboteurs to operate in their domain. Otherwise it is their neighbourhood that will suffer if things continue as they are. There is actually a need for a kind of clearing house where issues will be discussed and addressed by all stakeholders before they get out of control.

Having treated, in this chapter, the views of published literature about the nature and causes of Niger Delta's environmental problems, the next chapter will explore these environmental challenges from the perspective of ordinary Presbyterians who live in the region.

CHAPTER FOUR: NIGER DELTA'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS - A VIEW FROM THE GRASSROOTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the perception of ordinary Presbyterians, with additional data from other Christians, around Port Harcourt, concerning the state of Niger Delta's environment. It compares them with relevant literature on the subject for triangulation purposes. The data came from three major face-to-face field engagements in 2009 and 2012, and follow-on telephone conversations in 2016, drawing from a total of forty six interviews. There were also data from the questionnaire survey embarked upon in 2009 and 2016. From the perception of these key research partners the chapter seeks to answer the fundamental question: What is the most critical environmental problem in the Niger Delta, and what is responsible for creating these problems?

The responses bring up issues that are not directly linked to oil production, but that are nevertheless obstacles to sustainability in the region. The categories under which these problems are discussed follow closely those from chapter three. Although some of these categories are arbitrary, but as Jennifer Mason (2002:36) suggests, categorization facilitates the organization and interpretation of data in ways that make sense.

The chapter starts with a few local stories by the respondents, regarding how the poor state of the environment, and especially the crisis that ensued, affected ordinary people at the height of the Niger Delta conflict. This conflict raged between the Niger

Delta militants, ostensibly representing the aggrieved oil-bearing communities on one hand, and the government and oil companies on the other.

4.2 Living Stories: Local Challenges, Innovative Solutions

This section focusses on the voices of the people in the community, giving a glimpse of the environment where ordinary Presbyterians live, work and worship. It captures how the Niger Delta environmental problem has affected their lives. It brings home the impact of these problems on the sufferers, instead of seeing them and their experiences as abstract phenomena. Situating their responses within the context of their lived experience helps us to understand why they responded the way they did to the Niger Delta environmental crisis.

4.2.1 Story 1 – Diobu Congregation

The PCN parish in this part of the city is located in the Mile Two area of Diobu, one of the older areas in the heart of Port Harcourt. Although the area has managed to retain its pre-independence colonial heritage of well-planned streets and housing, it suffers from decaying infrastructure. Chiamaka Ukia (B6/2012) is a youth member of the church. Her assessment of Diobu's environment is of general unkemptness. She describes Diobu as 'smelly', probably due to the general unsanitary nature of the market and the several observable stagnant pools of water (B6/2012/8).

The church is located among shops in a reclaimed swamp at the bottom of the Mile 2 market.¹ The busy mechanic workshop and building material suppliers at the entrance of the church have broken down vehicles, metal contraptions and so on, parked

¹ It is important to note however that many years ago the whole area, where the church is built, was, and still is, a reclaimed swamp. Probably because of the cost of acquiring land in Port Harcourt people have bought land in all sorts of places including swamps and flood plain. The dire consequence is that people are displaced whenever there is flooding, especially as the drains in the area (where they exist) do not seem to be fit for purpose.

dangerously on that narrow access road into the church compound. These obscure the view of the church from the main road. Chike Job (B4/2012/6), another youth member of the church, has described Diobu as a 'free zone' due to the seeming lawlessness being experienced. He states that people do anything they want to without being challenged. Buttressing the sense of a breakdown of the traditional system of governance he further states that people

...from every nook and cranny of Nigeria can reside here freely without being under any community law (B4/2012/6).

This state of affairs and the lack of community cohesion, as Chike stresses, have created serious ancillary issues such as insecurity, which in the Niger Delta threw up a rash of non-State armed actors under the general name of Niger Delta militants. Mr Henry Ogbo (B7/2012/9-10) gives a sense of the pervasive nature of the state of insecurity at the local level when talking about how groups of young people constituting themselves into cults entice their peers (including his own son) into their group. They harassed members of the public and extorted money from them, not sparing church members. Since the church had nowhere else to run to they decided to confront these gangs, not by physical force, but by moral suasion.² All these bring to light the danger that members of the Presbyterian Church faced in the midst of the crisis. Mrs Ugochi Nnam (B5/2012/7) believes that these groups of actors were actually used by politicians to achieve their own political ends against their opponents, particularly during elections.

² Henry says he challenged them openly to dare molest anyone. He thinks this could be the reason why his son was targeted for recruitment into one of these groups.

4.2.2 Story 2 – Rumuomasi Church

Just like the Diobu church, the access road into the Rumuomasi PCN is also obstructed by the activities of auto-mechanics and other artisans, causing a nuisance to the church and its neighbours. In addition, the area is prone to flooding. This raises a question as to why Presbyterian Churches seem to choose difficult terrains like swampy grounds to site their church buildings.³ Mr Ere Oba (C3/2012) narrated the challenge they have gaining access to the church during flooding:

Some of the water from the gutter, before we sand-filled this estate, used to overflow and enter into the church compound. I remember there was a Sunday that we could not worship because the church was over flooded... So... due to the level of water no vehicle entered this compound. The children that came in that day, we had to carry them on the shoulders for them not to drown due to the level of water (C3/2012/21-22).

However, Rumuomasi PCN faced their greatest challenge when a major international hotel chain sited their hotel on a piece of land sitting on the local drainage channel. This further exacerbated the flooding issues affecting the neighbourhood, the church, neighbours' homes and businesses for longer periods. Omo Omoba, a church elder and key officer of the church, recounted some of their church's peculiar experiences and action, thus:

We have championed moves to improve our environment. [A hotel] for instance, all their wastes pass through our community and they do not care at all. So we instituted a suit against them in court. But our neighbours in the community were not forthcoming. Even if we provide the money we need people to go and stand. So after a point the thing [case] was struck off for want of evidence.

It will be interesting for you to know that recently there was a fire outbreak in one of the neighbouring compounds as you approach the church. The [hotel] had a fire incident in their compound, and the fire followed waste diesel on top of the drainage line towards our church. What saved us was that the gutter was filled [with flood water], so the fire could not cross the top of the culvert. It stopped at that shop [pointing] and burnt the shop.

³ This was happening at a time when there was still ample space around them from which to choose better spots. In this case the members of Rumuomasi lament why their forebears bought the present swampy and flood prone plot when they had a lot of dry and unencumbered land along the major Stadium Road where they are situated. The reason at that time was probably to save cost, but the result is that decades afterwards they are still grappling with the cost of filling the land with dry sand. In the long-run they are comparatively spending far more than they would if they had bought a good place.

Fire trucks came, about four or five of them, but they could not gain entrance into the place. They had to extend their hose to stop the fire from spreading. Our minister even started packing his books, and they had to carry their children out of the place. So it was [the hotel] that repaired those houses that were destroyed. So, we have championed more peaceful way of channelling our grievances, although some of our neighbours wanted us to go and fight, we said, No. Of course, [the hotel] surrounded themselves with heavily armed policemen and security, so no one could come close. People lost a lot of things. Well that's what we've done as a church (C9/2012/16-17).

This story shows how the congregation in Rumuomasi has faced up to its local environmental problems, which are largely man-made. Significantly, they were not deterred by the hotel's international, political, and financial clout. In spite of the hotel using state security apparatus to surround itself, ostensibly to intimidate neighbours, the Rumuomasi church responded robustly and dynamically within the limits of the law and their financial ability. They mobilised their neighbours into a potent community group that brought a suit against the hotel and it footed the legal bills. Furthermore, the church's influence in the community was a key moderating factor, persuading their more radical neighbours to agree to the court option as against their (neighbours') initial plans to engage in a physical confrontation with the hotel staff (C9/2012/11).

In addition to the hotel blocking the drainage channels which caused localised flooding in the area, it discharged waste petroleum products from its power-generating plants without proper disposal which became an added threat to the environment. In response to the situation the church mobilised neighbours to take action. Mr Ere Oba added that the 'Church has created wooden walkways' to ease movement in the area, especially during the rainy season, and have 'unblocked drains' to ease the incidence of flooding (C3/2012/21).

Noteworthy is the above mentioned hostile response from the hotel to the genuine grievances of the church and other neighbours which only worsened relationships in

the community. It is not known whether the pressure mounted by the church on the hotel influenced its eventual reconstruction of neighbours' properties after its initial denial of responsibility (C9/2012/16).

Members of this church, however, decry the lack of support from the higher authorities of the church. They claim that the apex General Assembly (GA) has not given their congregation the reasonable support to enable them deal with their environmental challenges (C9/2012/18-19). Elder Omoba believes that they require trained manpower to assist local congregations in understanding the situation and to enable them to respond appropriately. He notes however that there are lay Presbyterians (not church staff) who have been engaging with these issues as part of their employment and totally unrelated to their church affiliation (C9/2012/15-16). He cited the case of an elder with one of the churches in Port Harcourt who was involved in the rehabilitation of the demobilised Niger Delta militants. The individual's involvement was wholly based on his work role. Nonetheless, he observed that this elder's faith as a Christian combined with his professional expertise gave him an effective tool to deal with the issues involved with those ex-militants (Int.C9/2012/16).

4.2.3 Story 3 – Bori PCN

The Bori Presbyterian Church is located on a rented land in Bori, the headquarters of the Ogoni Kingdom. This bustling little town was the theatre of conflict between the Federal Government and the local people. It was in this place that their women and youths were organised to protest against the injustices they suffered in the hands of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the multinational oil companies such as Shell.

A member of the Bori PCN and a native of the community, Mr Comfort Endurance described the dangerous effect their poisoned environment was having on the people and the future danger it portends thus:

The environment will still have more effect on the people. If you check the age bracket of those who are dying here, you will find that they are mostly youths of thirty to forty years old, as a result of this pollution around us. The air we are inhaling is hydrocarbon, even the water we drink, we are drinking hydrocarbon. There is even more than the required [acceptable] level of hydrocarbon according to the UNEP Report.⁴ You will see that the environment has really been spoilt, depleted, by these multinational oil companies (E20/2012/32).

Mr Endurance laments that two years after the UNEP report was released in 2010 not much had been done in the form of implementing its recommendations. This has precipitated further disquiet among the Niger Delta people. There was a mass protest by the Ogoni people and some civil society groups on the 9th of August 2013 calling on the Federal Government to implement the UNEP report without further delay (Dikewoha, 2013).⁵

⁴ The United Nations Environmental Program commissioned an environmental audit of the Ogoni region of the Niger Delta, and subsequently released a scientific report that found among other things that 'oil contamination in Ogoniland is widespread and severely impacting many components of the environment. Even though the oil industry is no longer active in Ogoniland, oil spills continue to occur with alarming regularity. The Ogoni people live with this pollution every day' (UNEP 2011:9). The report indicted Shell Petroleum Development Company and its agents for the pollution in Ogoniland, and also blamed factors such as oil theft (popularly called oil bunkering) and vandalism of oil facilities by protesters and artisanal refiners. However, it is instructive that the UNEP (2011: 12) 'study concludes that the control, maintenance and decommissioning of oilfield infrastructure in Ogoniland are inadequate. Industry best practices and SPDC's own procedures have not been applied, creating public safety issues.' See: http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/OEA/UNEP_OEA.pdf. Accessed 23/10/2013

⁵ An online news article of The Nation newspaper of 09/08/2013 carried this report. It says that, 'The protest was led by the Social Action, Ogoni Solidarity Forum (OSF) and Friends of the Earth Nigeria (FoEN). Placards with various inscriptions and posters of the late Ogoni environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa were everywhere. Some the placard read: 'Ogoni Still Waiting for Justice', 'UNEP Report Ogoni Still Waiting For Implementation', 'Our Environment Has Been Poisoned', Ogoni Demands State of Emergency in Environment and Health', 'We Are Dying', etc. The peaceful protest almost turned violent when six protesters were arrested by the police for allegedly ordering the closure of shops and coercing traders in the area to participate in the protest. But, the traders who spoke with our reporter said they decided to lock up their shops in solidarity with the struggle... Dr. Godwin Uyi Ojo, Executive Director ERA/FoEN, said it should not take the Federal Government forever to implement the UNEP report on Ogoniland, if it is sincere.'

Available at: <http://thenationonline.net/new/ogoni-ngos-protest-non-implementation-of-unep-report/>. Accessed 24/10/2013.

Another member of the church, Festus Karl who is a non-native of the area, recalled the dangers and suffering people in the town faced due to insecurity during the height of the crisis. According to him it was just the intervention of the military task force that returned sanity to the area. He says:

Before the presence of JTF [Joint Task Force] and internal security, we had no peace of mind because of lack of security. The Yege Boys used to loot the area claiming the town to be theirs. Even those of us who are strangers ran helter-skelter. In fact, it was so bad in 1993 that I chartered a vehicle that evacuated my property to my village Ohafia [in Abia State]. Then there was also the Andoni versus Ogoni crisis [and other intertribal wars]. There was harassment from different gangs/cult – Yege Boys and Dee Gbam – and the police had no solution to this. It is only the presence of the JTF that has made the place calm now (E18/2012/28-29).

The point is that members of the church, just like the rest of the public, suffered a lot of hardship from the upheaval that the years of degradation and neglect of the environment has caused. The tension made it difficult for them to speak out against the injustices. Apart from those like Mr Karl, who evacuated from the area, the rest of the population remained, under intense pressure and surveillance. It was worse for young people, who dared not speak for fear of being branded as militant. Such stigma puts people at risk of imprisonment or even physical harm from agents of the Nigerian State. A youth member of Bori PCN lamented, ‘Everybody is less concerned. But, when you come out to speak they see you as an activist and so, you are not [considered] a Christian, [but] an activist’ (E20/2012/31). He accuses the church for failing in its responsibility to speak for the people.

4.2.4 Story 4 – Bodo City Presbyterian Church

The Bodo City congregation is under the Rumuomasi Parish in Port Harcourt and is made up of mainly the local people. Bodo City, as the town is fondly called, is more of a rural town at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. It plays host to oil installations run by the Anglo-Dutch oil giant, Shell. In March 2012 the community brought a case against Shell, in a London court, to seek redress for years of environmental degradation in the

area.⁶ The community has also suffered fractious internal politics that has led to the loss of many lives, notably during the electioneering campaigns of 1999 and 2003 elections.⁷

Mrs Charity Ogoni, a farmer, narrated how oil pollution has killed all fishes in their waters and polluted their farmlands. Even at the time of this interview on 2 December 2012 she claimed that crude oil was still on the surface of the water, and that many people were dying of all kinds of ailments related to the same oil pollution (F21/2012/32). Another member of the Church, G. V. Zagaben (an ordained Elder) supported these stories, and added that previously they used to fish within their local bodies of water, but at the moment they have to paddle in their dug-out canoe for five hours into the ocean towards Bonny before they are able to catch any fish. The habitat is so degraded that the mangrove forest is gradually dying out. He says he is worried that the ecosystem of the area is being destroyed without remedy. That means they have to paddle ten hours for a return trip to an unpolluted fishing point with all the attendant risk of taking their tiny canoes into the open ocean (F22/2012/33).

4.2.5 Story 5 – Mary Slessor Memorial PCN (MSMPCN)

Sabo Panti recounts some of the difficulties they faced at the height of the Niger Delta crisis, especially from 2006 to 2009 when the government of Nigeria declared an amnesty which served to reduce tensions. The crisis includes communal and political unrests that displaced people, including himself. There were criminal gangs that harassed and molested people under the guise of protesting the injustice in the Niger Delta. Sometimes these gangs fought what appeared to be territorial wars, killing innocent people caught in the crossfire. In Diobu, he says,

it was between the *Dee Gbam Boys* and the *Elegem Face Boys*, while in old Port Harcourt town where MSMPCN is situated it was between the *Greenland* and *Iceland*' (A3/2012/6).

In the above situation ordinary people suffered both losses of lives and of income. As has been discussed in the previous chapter and further in the current one, such violence led to the sabotage of public infrastructure with dire environmental

⁶ Source: <http://platformlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/The-Bodo-Community-and-The-Shell-Petroleum-Development-Company-of-Nigeria-Ltd.pdf>. Accessed 29/01/2013.

⁷ Source: www.cehrd.org/files/The_Bodo_war_of_Attrition2.doc.

consequences. Life has now come back to some kind of normalcy as much of the turf wars between the gangs have calmed, and the conflict between the militants and the government and oil companies have ceased. The environmental concern of the locals in that part of the old Port Harcourt city, where the church is located, seems now to be with regards to the unsanitary condition of the area.

4.2.6 Summary of Stories

It is evident that the Niger Delta environment is challenged by complex issues, and that what happens in the society affects the church and its members, as they are not immune to the lived experiences of the larger society. Furthermore, each context is faced with their own peculiar environmental issue which together span bio-physical, economic, and socio-political issues. These are unpacked in the next section.

4.3 Environmental Issues affecting the Niger Delta Region

The lived experiences of the respondents corroborate information from the secondary sources, that activities from the oil extractive industry remain the cardinal danger to sustainability in the Niger Delta environment. The result of interviews (2009 and 2012) and surveys (2009 and 2016) agree that pollution from oil and gas exploration are the most critical environmental problems facing the Niger Delta. In the latest, October 2016, survey (see *Appendix 1*) 183 respondents out of 197 agreed to the statement that *'Pollution from Oil and Gas exploration activities is the most critical environmental problem suffered in the Niger Delta'*. On this occasion 9 people disagreed, and 5 were neutral. The particular problems as distilled and categorized from the interview data (See *Appendix 2*) are in the form of oil spills, gas flaring, acid rain, oil bunkering, and direct pollution from ancillary activities.

4.3.1 Oil Spill

Elder O Omoba (C9/2012) of the Rumuomasi parish blames the oil spills on a number of factors including poor production procedures, and the normal wear and tear of equipment due to age. He lists the sources of the oil spill to be a result of:

Production procedure, wear and tear by age, some of them are deliberate...man made..., and...oil theft. Those who do such things [oil theft] create their own kind of problem...when they finish draining...some will spill (C9/2012/11).

These views find support with other respondents such as Barrister Andrew Apple of (G24/2012) the Woji Parish who outlined three types of pollution associated with oil and gas exploration. These he says are those that occur as a result of:

1. The normal working of the oil as you may have leaks here and there;
2. Crude oil stealing; and
3. Sabotage and vandalism by aggrieved people, especially the militants (G24/2012/39).

On the first point, he argues that the so-called experts tasked with the clean-up of the affected sites do not seem able to contain the increasing cases of spillage, thus aggravating relations with the local people. The people's sense of helplessness and frustration was palpable in the voice of C. Cheetham-West talking about the effect of oil-related pollution in the region:

we are not so happy about the way it [oil] is exploited, or the use to which it is put. We seem to be neglected in the use of this God-given [stammers and struggles to find the right word]...I don't know what to call it...it is something God has given us. It is more or less becoming a curse now. The way it is exploited tends to interfere with the organisms in the sea, because sometimes there is oil pollution and the thing flows all over the water. And since we are people who live in water area, to allow such a thing to happen means we are tampering with our livelihood. If you were from this area and you find oil floating on top of the water or in the mangrove, therefore polluting the water and killing off animals you will feel very unhappy. Like the place where oil was first found, Oloibiri, which has become a kind of desert now, it is very serious. And it is not only Oloibiri (D17/2012/27).

These anecdotal and experiential evidence will find support when compared with published literature later in this chapter. Mr Maxwell Alwell supported the point made by Mr Apple which suggests there cannot be one hundred percent fool-proof safety in the production process. He said in his experience there is routine release of

hydrocarbon during the maintenance of oil well heads (H30/2012/48). But the poor compliance to safety and precautionary processes suggests such effusions are left untreated as the discussed in Chapter three.

The above situation creates the types of environmental issues being discussed here, and for which Elder Mrs Chika Uka paints a picture – of oil spillage and its impact on the soil, vegetation and water in the region thus:

...So we don't even have adequate vegetation around us, the water has been polluted so the fishes that used to exist are no more there. And when you go to the riverine areas it is worse because you see lots of waste land because oil has made the land unusable, because of oil spills and all that. So there's a lot of it around us, so you see people living in poverty in the midst of plenty (G23/2012/33-34)

The propensity of these problems to create secondary issues such as poverty is another angle that Mrs Uka has highlighted in her assessment of the crisis.

4.3.2 Gas Flaring

The release of associated gas is thought a normal aspect of the production process (G24/2012/39). Such released gases should be harnessed for industrial and domestic usage, or alternatively reinjected into the ground. But the respondents say in the case of Nigeria a large proportion of the gas is flared or burnt into the atmosphere. The Director of the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D), the Rev Okechukwu Iro, laments that gas flaring has gone unabated since the inception of the industry. His view is that the government's regulatory mechanism has either collapsed or been compromised. He believes that:

About 80% of gas liberated from the oil fields are flared. They increase environmental pollution. Certain substances are released into the air that are carcinogenic, such as dioxins. There is also CO₂ that results in acid rain. People drink it like that and it causes cancer. Apart from the effect on human life it also destroys aquatic and plant life. And because plant life is destroyed there is increased carbon dioxide in the air since there are

no plants to absorb it. The effect on human health is thus increased to a dangerous level (I34/2012/55).⁸

Mr Maxwell Alwell a youth member of Oyigbo parish also narrated a local experience of how the release of hydrocarbons affects their environment. He says:

They have the well-head at Ndoki [in the outskirts of Oyigbo] where they have the flared gas...there is another pollution during the circulation of the well. They spray the hydrocarbons in order to energise the hydrocarbon coming up, so they use what they call hydraulics. So spraying hydraulics within the environment, you cannot farm there anymore. So that is one of the major negative impacts" (H30/2012/48-49).

In the above instances, the flaring of gas has been the fault of the multinational oil companies and their contractors. However, Rev Iro believes it is the failure of government and its agencies to regulate the oil and gas industry that has led to the ongoing flaring of gas. According to him the problem has remained because the 'goal post' (that is, the end date) for the cessation of gas flaring has been moved continuously by the government following heavy lobbying by the players in the oil industry (I34/2012/55). Such attitude of the government raises the question of how concerned the government is with regards to the health and welfare of its citizenry vis-à-vis vested interests.

Mr Edward Iniobong, an oil worker and a member of Woji Parish, acknowledged that 'exploration activities have severely impacted on the environment, destroying the source of livelihood of the people in fishing and farming. Oil comes with so many other things, e.g. gas flaring, affecting the atmosphere and the people' (G26/2012/43). Mr Iniobong, apart from making a direct link between gas flaring and its effect on the atmosphere, also points to its direct impact on the people.

⁸ Rev Iro's figure of 80% of associated gas being flared is no longer accurate. Most recent scholarship indicates that gas flaring has actually fallen from its previous high levels to about a third. See Table 3.1, showing the consistent reduction of Gas Flaring in Nigeria (Courtesy: Ismail & Umukoro, 2012:10).

With the Niger Delta terrain constituting mostly of rivers, creeks, and swamps, spilt hydrocarbon can quickly run through these water channels, with devastating impact on the people and the habitat (E20/2012/32). Economic activities in the region have also been adversely affected. Mr Vincent Zam illustrates the hazardous experience of fishermen who paddle their small dug-out canoes four to five hours into the open ocean in order to get a decent, uncontaminated catch (F22/2012/33). Hydrocarbon effluents are responsible for the destruction of the mangrove forest which is a natural habitat for fishery. With the added destruction of the people's fishing nets, the cost of oil exploration on the people and environment of the Niger Delta is enormous (Okonta & Douglas, 2001).

4.3.3 Acid Rain

When gas is flared into the atmosphere it does not only pollute the air, it also creates secondary problems that affect people and their habitat. One of such by-products is acid rain, in addition to hydrogen sulphide.⁹ It contaminates terrestrial and aquatic life forms, affecting plant, fish, animal and human lives. It leads to high cost of house maintenance, especially the roofs that have to be constantly repaired or replaced. Mrs Felicia Ogbo of Eleme parish decries the carefree attitude of landlords who are not minded to repair such damages despite receiving monetary compensation from the government for them (D15/2012/Q2).

4.3.4 Oil Bunkering

Barrister Andrew Apple's opinion is that industry-related oil-spill is instrumental to the degradation of the Niger Delta environment. However, he adds that oil theft and

⁹ It is important to note the danger that acid rain poses as "hydrogen sulphide produces sulphur oxides, and when sulphur oxide mixes with oxygen and water in the atmosphere, they produce acid rain". Source: <http://www.unitedijawstates.com>, accessed June 27, 2007

vandalism of oil installations have a serious part to play in creating this sordid situation, as thieves lack the knowledge to reduce the further effects of oil-spill when they sever pipelines. He says they 'open and steal the crude but they do not have the technicality to put it back, until Shell knows about it' (G24/2012/Q10). It has been argued that

'...poor people cannot open [establish] oil refinery. When the people buy a farm, they buy it based on what they want from that farm [food]. So it is the people that we elected that are destroying and affecting the environment' (E19/2012/Q4).

The question is why would people risk their lives to break into pipelines to syphon oil products, when they know the deadly consequence of such action? The answers from respondents seem to associate such high risk behaviour with the widespread frustration and anger among local people, and the desperation to survive their harsh economic realities. These appear to motivate extreme actions, and also serve as the tonic that propelled the armed militancy that hitherto raged in the area. In the end bunkering contributed to the degradation of the environment, and its proceeds also helped to fuel the insurgency that nearly tore the Nigerian nation apart. The rate of oil theft in Nigeria is a matter of public knowledge. Even the government laments it due to the colossal loss of revenue.

4.3.5 Noise

Oil drilling is not a quiet activity, and being an industrial zone the Niger Delta attracts all kinds of heavy machinery and equipment, dotting various parts of Port Harcourt and its environs, especially the Trans-Amadi industrial complex. Shell Petroleum Development Company has its own private industrial area, so does Agip and Mobil. The Eleme Petrochemical and Refining Company is one of the giant industrial concerns. Their combined activities and those of the ubiquitous ancillary independent

manufacturers make Port Harcourt a noise-prone zone, exacerbated by the largely unregulated commercial and transport sectors as recounted by Elder O Omoba (C9/2012/Q22). The situation highlights the weak nature of environmental regulation, including that of the housing sector, as there seems to be a mixed economy of both the commercial and residential portfolios.

The health hazard that the noise level poses to the society is dangerous. Unfortunately respondents expressed sadness at the culpability of churches and mosques to this noisome scenario as they compete as rivals for attention. Nnimmo Bassey, an international environmental activist, contends that many churches do little more than occupy space and add to the noise in their communities. In fact they are taking away from their communities rather than contributing to them. In his view there is a simple test to determine the value of any church to its community. He says,

‘Many of our churches are not in the community – they are just existing in the corner. If they pack out, the neighbourhood will be happy. They will say “thank God the noise is gone. There will no longer be traffic congestion”. But if a church is active in the community, if they want to move out, the community will say “No, Pastor where are you going? We want you here”. But how many churches will move and the community will complain? This should be a test for us (K2/2009/Q1).

Dr Benebo Fubara-Manuel, a minister of the PCN, attributes noise problem to a deep socio-cultural complex ingrained in the Nigerian society as a celebratory people (K1/2009/Q1). It goes with the idea of celebration every stage in life from birth to death.

4.3.6 Climate Change in the Niger Delta:

Although only three respondents showed awareness of the impact of climate change and global warming on the sustainability of their environment, the problem is nonetheless very critical. Endurance Comfort (E20/2012/Q7) links the phenomenon to the instability of the weather patterns, unpredictable weather patterns, flooding, and

even deaths being experienced in the Niger Delta (E20/2012/Q7). While lamenting the dangers posed by climate change both Uloma Sunny-Cookey and Paul Ajah placed the fate of humanity in the hands of God, Ajah call on people to turn back to God (K38/2009/13).

4.4 Sundry Environmental Problems

To show awareness it is important to highlight that there are other environmental problems facing the Niger Delta besides those emanating from oil and gas exploration. The most critical among them include waste management issues, flooding, unplanned population increase, and poor urbanization. The first two are worth a brief exploration.

Firstly, a majority of the respondents opine from experience that poor waste management ranks very high among non-oil related issues of degradation. The evidence is physically present for all to see with the heaps of uncared rubbish everywhere despite government's efforts to discourage the indiscriminate dumping of refuse.¹⁰ Elder Omoba (C9/2012/Q7) laments the lack of consistency and long-term sustainability of these efforts, especially with regards to removing the heaps of rubbish. He says of the main road where they live, 'This Aba Road, they always de-silt it once or twice a year, but when they finish they leave [silt] by the roadside, the next rain washes the whole thing back into the drainage system again' (C9/2012/Q7). Thus, the whole project concerning the generation, collection and disposal of silt followed, by rain-wash amounts to a vicious cycle, an effort in futility.

¹⁰ Incidentally it rained at Eleme on the day the interviews were conducted there. And as predicted by the church caretaker flood water took over the main road in front of the church, turning it into a flood channel. This was ostensibly because the gutters and drainages were either blocked by silt or refuse. The strength of the flood water pushed the rubbish in these drainage lines into the church compound.

Secondly, flooding has become a massive problem wreaking havoc in the region. The point is buttressed by the fact that virtually all the respondents pointed to it as being detrimental to their livelihood and their environment. This is perhaps due to the natural terrain of the Niger Delta region which is coastal and swampy, crisscrossed by numerous rivers and creeks. As for Endurance Comfort¹¹ (a youth activist and member of the Bori PCN) he thinks that the constant flooding and unpredictable weather patterns are caused by climate change. While criticizing the absence of government action on issues of the Ozone layer depletion and climate change, he says his organisation, the International Youth Council has now chosen to focus its campaign on these. He observes that it is presently difficult to distinguish the rain and dry seasons (E20/2012/Q1).

4.5 Factors Causing and Entrenching Niger Delta's Environmental Problems

The factors, identified by the Presbyterians interviewed, as being causative to the problems impacting on the Niger Delta environment are broad and complex. They encompass physical, economic, and socio-political factors. They have together impacted on the physical environment as much as the primary (physical environmental) problems considered under Sections 2.2 and 2.3. When all of these variables are put together, it becomes clear why the long-term sustainability of the Niger Delta environment is in jeopardy.

4.5.1 Negligence

Presbyterians in the Niger Delta believe that negligence is a key factor creating the environmental problems plaguing the area. It is a situation that one of the respondents has described as 'full time neglect' (G25/2012/Q5), experienced in different forms and

¹¹ Mr Endurance Comfort is the President of the Rivers State chapter of the International Youth Council.

at different levels of the society. Perhaps the most disturbing form of this is the neglect associated with governance, that is, government's dereliction of its statutory duties and responsibilities towards the people of the Niger Delta and the environment (E19/2012/Q1). There is also neglect related to the operations of the business and industrial sectors of the economy expressed in the form of poor and unsatisfactory social responsibility. And thirdly, neglect arising from the careless action of the general populace as evidenced by poor sanitary habits and their careless attitude towards the environment. All of these failures indicate lack of commitment to the environment with disturbing consequences its sustainability.

4.5.1a Negligence due to poor governance

Andrew Appleby agrees with Yelga Egba that government's dereliction of its statutory responsibility is purely because 'government is part of that business of corrupting the system' (E19/2012/Q1). Thus, Mr Appleby believes that 'corruption is the key...if we get it out of the way, there is no law in this country that we cannot implement' (G24/2012/Q2). According to him these laws are undermined by those he refers to as 'big Oga',¹² as well known as 'big man'. These are people who see themselves above the law and are held by government officials as 'untouchable' in society (G24/2012/Q4).

A common perception in the Niger Delta (and expressed by a majority of respondents) is of government's failure to protect the interest of its citizens and their environment. Their impression is of government collusion with the oil industry players to condone the reckless exploitation of natural resources, and less insistence on due process and

¹² *Oga* is a local term for Master. It is used to refer to prominent and influential individuals of high net-worth.

the rule of law in the oil sector. They are said to be more concerned about the revenue that accrues to them. The result of the above situation is that even the important function of regulation is not taken seriously. It is therefore suggested that for things to change the government and its agencies must create the enabling atmosphere for people and the environment to flourish under the rule of law. This must be accompanied by the political will to punish offenders.

4.5.1b Negligence due to Corporate Social Irresponsibility

Mr Edward Iniobong, an oil industry worker, recognizes how oil corporations have used bribes to compromise regulatory mechanisms to circumvent the task of remediating the environment, or where possible to get away with a shoddy task of doing it. Worse still, these Corporations compromise local community leaders, who having collected money from the oil companies suppress the news about spillage (G24/2012/Q13). Thus, pollution sites are left unattended for a long time, exacerbating the situation. The so-called compensation money and bribes which are thought to fuel some of the conflicts in oil producing communities will be discussed further under 'Insecurity'.

The role of the players in the oil industry, especially the multinational Oil Corporations (MNOC), in supporting Niger Delta communities and the environment has, by the judgment of another respondent, been underwhelming. The industry is rife with cronyism and favoritism which are at the heart of injustice against the people and the environment. The outcome is that the oil companies 'neglect their roles and responsibilities in cleaning up, and this affects the health of the people and also affects their farmlands and fishery resources, because they are farmers and fishermen. All these, as far as I'm concerned, is social injustice' (I33/2012/Q8).

Despite these criticisms MNOCs are by comparison the best paying employers in Nigeria, and the economic activities the oil and gas sector generates and supports has a ripple effect beyond their Niger Delta base. Their yearly scholarships, a good chunk of which is reserved for the people of the oil-producing communities, provide educational opportunities for thousands of young Nigerians.

4.5.1c Negligence due to carefree public attitude to the environment

Whether as a tool for resistance by the militants, or an act of criminality (bunkering) by oil thieves, vandalism of oil facilities and other infrastructure are acts of sabotage that has hurt the economy, the people, and the environment. Unfortunately these elements lack the technical knowhow to close up the broken pipelines, leading to long-term degradation particularly where the professionals find difficult to access the sites (C9/2012/Q1, Q2).

Although it is difficult to verify, there are speculations that some of the acts of sabotage are deliberately carried out by recalcitrant elements in the local community who use it to bargain clean-up contracts for themselves (C9/2012/Q1). They see this as a means of gaining their own share of the 'national cake', as Nigerians often say. But all of these reveal the carefree public attitude that feeds into the culture of neglect of the environment. Such carelessness produced the situation that made Rev Oscar Alaba to describe Oyigbo as a slum (H32/2012/Q1). Some members of the public deride people who try to do something to help the environment, according to Endurance Comfort (E20/2012/Q6).

Engineer Chi Nedu, an oil worker, believes that the situation in the Niger Delta persists because 'there are other things that preoccupy people's minds other than the environment' (G25/2012/Q5). Some of these are related to priority placed on the need

for personal survival which relegates the need of the environment to the background, thus entrenching the state of unsustainability in the Niger Delta. Okechukwu Iro, the Director of PCS&D, suggests that the change in public attitude can only happen through a concerted behaviour change campaign (BCC).

4.5.2 Corruption

The unsustainable state of the Niger Delta environment has previously in *Section 3.5.1* above been attributed to the corroding effect of corruption on the body polity of the Nigerian nation. Many of the respondents agree that if corruption is dealt with, then other aspects of the nation's problems, including the issue of the environment, would be rectified. As a result Andrew Apple contends that the state of degradation and neglect of the environment currently experienced in the Niger Delta is because of acts of impunity by powerful interests (G24/2012/Q2).

Taking a look at the situation C. Cheetham West asks rhetorically (in an evasive manner)¹³ whether the problem is that of corruption or of ignorance. Notwithstanding, he believes that deeply imbedded in this problem is the incidence of nepotism and cronyism. This plays out in the appointment of the wrong people into important positions simply because those in authority want them to protect certain interests. In the end such appointees are not able to deliver the expected result because they were not suited for the position.

¹³ Dr C West seemed concerned about the consequences of his candid opinion during the interview. His answers were often evasive and rhetorical, trying as best as he could not to offer his personal opinion. Yet he could not hold back his disappointment on the state of things in the Niger Delta and the country as a whole. It is safe to conclude that his measured responses were a reflection of the tense atmosphere that was still prevalent in the Niger Delta despite that the violence had scaled down since the amnesty of 2009.

4.5.3 Poor Regulation and Weak Institutions:

The other side of the problem of impunity or the lack of political will to implement laws is the ill-preparedness of regulatory and enforcement agencies. Edward Iniobong, a local church official at Woji Parish, gave an insider perspective (as an oil worker) attributes the ineffectiveness of agencies such as the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) to dependence on the MNOCs that they tasked to regulate. He explains that,

for the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)¹⁴ to go to site to do its work, it relies on the same companies [it is supposed to be regulate and oversee] to transport, accommodate and feed them in order to do their job. How can someone who has received such favours come back and report anything negative? So, government agencies as it were have not been properly equipped in terms of monitoring the processes in the oil and gas industry (G26/2012/Q2).

Such scenario only helps to fuel the sentiments earlier expressed of collusion between the government and the oil companies. It also undermines the work of the regulators who are placed in a difficult position when reliant on the benevolence of the companies they are supposed to be overseeing.

4.5.4 Militancy, Insecurity and Land Crisis

Respondents narrated their experience of insecurity and a total state of lawlessness at the height of the Niger Delta crisis in the 1990s and early to mid-2000s. A rash of non-State armed actors used their arms with impunity in broad day light, terrorizing innocent citizens (E18/2012/Q1). Niger Delta militants ran riot across the region, attacking both military and civilian targets.

When environment is affected by any of the earlier mentioned forms of pollution, it displaces communities and forces them to seek alternative sites for habitation and

¹⁴ The DPR is the government department vested with regulating the activities of operators in the oil industry.

economic activities. Farmers and fishermen have to vie for scarce land and natural resources. Such movements is a potential for conflict, one of which was that experienced by Festus Karl between the Ogoni v Andoni in the 1990s and early 2000s. The war forced him to temporarily vacate Bori for his village in the neighboring Abia State (E18/2012/Q1). Mrs Felicia Ogbo¹⁵ who lives in Eleme also narrated the suffering they experienced during the protracted conflict between Eleme and Okrika communities over which of the two communities is entitled to the royalty from the land the Eleme Petro-chemical Refinery occupies (D15/2012/Q1).

But beyond the pressure induced by land scarcity, these inter- and intra-communal conflicts were also about the fight over compensation money for land acquired by the government and the industries. It is also about how the proceeds are shared among various stakeholders (K3/2009/Q1). Andrew Apple accuses some of the traditional rulers of using the royalties selfishly to train their families and relatives to the detriment of the entire community (G24/2012/Q14). In that context C. Cheetham West wonders whether oil wealth has been a blessing or a curse considering the greed, conflicts and destruction it has fueled in the region, in addition to how this God-given blessing has been exploited (D17/2012/Q2).

From the foregoing it can be seen that pollution and conflict in the Niger Delta do reinforce each other, and consequently creates insecurity at all levels. At first it was difficult to relate insecurity with the state of unsustainability in the Niger Delta. But like poverty, insecurity is both a major cause and a consequence of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. Besides the destruction of lives and property, insecurity

¹⁵ Mrs F Ogbo, a Women's Guild member of the Eleme Parish of the PCN was interviewed in November 2012.

became the cover and tool for the sabotaging of oil installations. The spectre of kidnapping that loomed ever so large at that time, meant that oil workers could not access ruptured infrastructure, even if they wanted.

4.5.5 Social Injustice and Inequality

Observers of the environmental situation in the Niger Delta have struggled to make sense of why the unsustainable state of affairs has been left to continue. Ugo Ogbo, and Igbo housewife, could only put it down to injustice. Her views were supported by that of the Director of communication of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, the Kalu Eme when he said:

I would say that the Niger Delta poses one of the most disturbing disorders in Nigeria. The Niger Delta is a problem of social injustice, it is a problem of physical degradation of the environment. It is a problem of neglect. The Niger Delta is an environment of extreme disparity. People say this is a paradox...in the sense that in spite of the fact that this is the area that controls the oil wealth of Nigeria it's been neglected for quite a long time by the governments we have had in terms of physical development. And the oil companies that exploit these oil resources are also not coming forward in terms of environmental sanitation. All these, as far as I'm concerned, is social injustice (I33/2012/Q8).

Eme believes that such state of affairs is responsible for the emergence of all sorts of vices, including kidnapping, in the name of agitations for equity in the polity. It also creates a cover for corrupt enrichment whereby individuals get rich overnight, feeding fat on the nation's commonwealth. Further association was made in that same statement by Eme between the incidence of poverty and injustice, which according to him and other commentators is a paradox. Injustice also creates a corrupt underground economy which shuts out the majority from the commonwealth, and lends itself to cronyism and nepotism, reinforcing the paradox of want in the midst of plenty. Furthermore, injustice breeds anger and desperation which become justification for acts of vandalism and sabotage by disgruntle elements as a protest

action (G24/2012/Q10). The solution would include an equitable distribution of wealth to benefit the people of the delta who suffer most from the degradation highlighted.

4.5.6 A Question of Poverty and Unemployment

Issues of a degraded environment, on one hand, versus poverty and unemployment on the other, affect and reinforce one another. When pollution affects the land and water resources on which local people depend, their means of livelihood is destroyed resulting in unemployment. By extension unemployment without the benefit of a safety net is a potential for poverty. When people are poor they find it difficult to think about preserving the environment (C9/2012/Q16). Their first concern is that of survival and self-preservation, even though that might at times mean that they care less about their own safety and the wellbeing of the environment when they adopt certain acts of desperation. Poverty and unemployment become locked in a vicious cycle with neglect of the environment.

Although unemployment is not peculiar to the Niger Delta alone, what makes it a focal issue in this case is that it is mostly a man-made structural problem, which the respondents believe is constructed to marginalize people from the region (J33/2012/Q8-9; J35/2012/Q1-7). Jobs are given to people from other sections of the country with the excuse that Niger Delta indigenes are not qualified (C11/2012/Q4). The question is, why has the government and the oil companies not adopted an educational empowerment program specific to the region, to empower and position them for those jobs? Specific funds such as the Petroleum Development Trust Fund (PTDF) that grants scholarship to train manpower for the petroleum industry could be directed to focus on the Niger Delta, instead of being spread thin across the country.

The knowledge that pollution from the same oil industry put their fishermen and farmers out of business, should make the employment of young people from oil-producing communities a priority. Otherwise the unemployed become sucked into the poverty cesspool and are tempted to device unorthodox survival strategies, including attraction into political thuggery, bunkering, robbery, or kidnapping gangs.

4.5.7 Ignorance and Negative Cultural Shift

Some interviewees believe that the culture of indifference to the environment is fueled by poverty and illiteracy (C9/2012/Q17), and poor habit (A1/2012/Q3). Others blame the advent of modernity for the erosion of pro-environmental cultural values (G27/2012/Q6). There is also the ignorance or indifference of the wealthy class who despite their financial capacity are reluctant to invest to better the environment, except if will serve their interest. The case of the hotel in Rumuomasi and the inferno, which resulted from its careless attitude to handling waste oil, is emblematic of the problem (C9/2012/Q12).

But at the heart of the environmental problems is a negative shift in moral and traditional environmental values in the society. Some respondents believe it is responsible for the loss of the traditional affinity between the people and their environment based on their traditional African religion. In fact, Rev K. U. Eme¹⁶, while responding to the question of changing values and the apparent disconnection between the people and their environment did not exempt Christians from blame. He lamented that the primordial sense of moral values that held society together has changed:

¹⁶ Eme is the Director of Information and Public Affairs of the PCN

Everybody wants to be a millionaire. But I also have to blame the Church because of prosperity preaching that has helped to change the fabrics of society. Where the Church now gives awards to people, for example *Ezinne*, *Ezinna*, Knight of this and that, even when we know that these people do not really deserve it.¹⁷

In the villages these things [moral values] don't happen again. In those days when someone left the village and came back with a car after six months the village head will call your parents and your kindred to come and explain how you got the sudden wealth. And if there is no good explanation they will ostracise him, but today if you leave the village a poor man and come back with a Jeep after three days they will make you a chief. So values have really changed, nobody cares about anything. Moral values, godly values have changed (I33/2012/Q5).

This problem also affects the present commoditisation of land, given land monetary value which overrides its cultural value. But to what extent Christianity has contributed to this state of things is debatable, despite that Rev Kalu U. Eme believes that the award of honours to undeserving elements of the society and the influence of prosperity preaching are avenues through which the Church has inadvertently legitimised corruption. But it is critical that, if as is commonly known, that most people in the Niger Delta are Christians, then it can be safely assumed that Christianity has a part to lay in restoring what has been lost.

Omoba believes that the solution to this sort of ignorance is in persistent public education across all segments of the society, with its inclusion in curriculum of schools (C9/2012/Q19). This is where the PCS&D believes that they can make a huge difference through their behaviour modification programs (I34/2012/Q3). In addition a re-orientation on good maintenance culture will be a worthwhile aspect of the program for MNOs who have been criticised for negligence (C9/2012/Q21).

4.6 Comparing Views with Those of Current Scholarship

It is useful at this juncture to see how the above views from the grassroots compare with those of published literature in chapter. To do this I will be exploring a few core issues, their causes and to see how the views relate or diverge.

¹⁷ *Ezinne* (Good Mother) and *Ezinna* (Good Father) are special awards given to women and men during Mother's Day and Father's celebrations, respectively.

4.6.1 Oil Spills and degradation

The views of Presbyterians that oil and gas associated degradation is the main source of unsustainability in the region is not dissimilar to those of prevailing literature presented in the previous chapter. The pieces of evidence agree that all spheres of the environment (land, air and water) have been badly affected by pollution, and that all sections of the oil and gas industry are involved – from exploration, to extraction, to refining, and even distribution (Okonta & Douglas, 2001; Muritala, 2012).

It is striking that so much of what is said about pollution from oil and gas activities is almost always linked with exploration and extraction, not much mention is made of issues related to refining and distribution. But survey indicates that these latter stages of the process have been contributory to the environmental problems in the delta. An example of significant impact is that of the air quality around Alesa Eleme community, which is so poor that it is physically observable. It comes in the form of dusts, haze, fumes and odour emanating from the Eleme Refinery and Petrochemical Industry (D16/2012/Q3). This same concern was raised previously in 2009 by Paul Ajah who lives and works near that refinery (K38/2009/Q14). Also anecdotal evidence by Endurance Comfort, a youth activist and member of Bori PCN, buttresses the point that the high level of air pollution is producing fatalities especially among the younger generation (E20/2012/Q5).

Also, Rev Okechukwu Iro drew attention to the negative impact of gas flaring and acid rain on the environment and general health of the people, and makes the link between the increasing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions into the atmosphere and the incidents of global warming and climate change. Gas flaring, according to him, has been compounded by the destruction of aquatic and plant lives that would have mitigated

the situation. Furthermore he believes that the growing levels of carcinogens in the Nigeria is an indication of a highly polluted environment, impacting negatively on the people health (I34/2012/55-56).

4.6.2 Gas Flaring

Mr Edward Iniobong, an oil worker and a member of Woji Parish, acknowledged that

exploration activities have severely impacted on the environment, destroying the source of livelihood of the people in fishing and farming. Oil comes with so many other things, e.g. gas flaring, affecting the atmosphere and the people (G26/2012/43).

The above statement makes a direct link between gas flaring and its effect on the atmosphere, also points to its direct impact on the people.

4.6.3 Adaptation and Coping with Global Warming and Climate Change

Mr Iniobong (G26/2012) recognizes that climate change is affecting life in the Niger Delta, citing the example of flooding:

'The recent flooding has never been experienced in the Niger Delta before. It may be due to climate change, the dam in Cameroon, and so on. So many states have been affected in Nigeria as a whole' (G26/2012/43).

Dr Paul Ajah (K38/2009) believes that climate change is impacting on the people's lives, and calls on them to turn to God, saying

Concerning climate change, global warming etc only indicate that the earth is increasingly becoming inhospitable, and indicate the need for people to turn back to God (K38/2012)

Although only a few respondents showed awareness of the impact of climate change and global warming on the sustainability of their environment, the problem is nonetheless very critical. The region's vulnerability to these disasters, and especially to flooding is heightened by its low-lying state (UNEP, 2010:22). The coastal riverine areas

of Rivers State lay just between two and five metres above sea level,¹⁸ making them prone to flooding, therefore, needing proactive coping and adaptation mechanisms put in place. This is particularly because '[t]he southern part is subject to tidal influences and is highly susceptible to recurrent inundation by riverine flooding' (UNEP, 2010:22).

4.6.4 The Dangers Posed by Oil Bunkering and Artisanal Refineries

Within the oil economy of Nigeria has emerged an underground economy sustained by a nexus of local and foreign actors fed by illicit oil tapped illegally from unguarded (or actually deliberately disregarded) facilities. Poverty and general frustration in the Niger Delta have been said to lead desperate individuals to adopt dangerous and unorthodox means such as bunkering to sustain themselves.¹⁹ However this argument has been challenged by Yelga Egba who argues that bunkering and illegal (artisanal) refineries is not a business that can be driven by poor people, as its capital intensity is beyond their financial and logistical capacity. Consequently, he believes it is sponsored by people with strong financial and political means (E19/2012/30). This notion is validated by other authorities such as Augustine Ikelegbe (2005:212) and Nils Duquet (2011:142). Oil bunkering and illegal refining of crude oil have been named as the current most critical sources of environmental pollution in the Niger Delta (G24/2012/Q10; Amnesty International, c2008:4).

Bunkering feeds into the heart of insecurity in the Niger Delta, as the illegal oil barons arm their foot soldiers to escort barges ferrying oil to large vessels anchored in the sea for onward shipment to refineries abroad according to Nils Duquet (2011:142).

¹⁸ It rises to about 45 metres above sea level in the drier upland parts of the State (UNEP, 2010:22). This leaves most of the State vulnerable to any dangerous rise in sea levels.

¹⁹ A term used locally to describe oil theft from oil installations. Both crude oil and finished petroleum products are targeted.

Augustine Ikelegbe (2005:212) had earlier located the problem within the wider discourse of an 'informal international underground economy' involving international criminal rackets who take advantage of conflict environments. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the hands of non-State actors Nils Duquet (2011:136-149) writes is therefore a part of that complex web of the economy of violence in the Niger Delta. The network involves not only the oil thieves and their sponsors, but also politicians, government officials, community leaders, and so on, who arm youths for their selfish quest for power.

4.6.5 The Quest for Lasting Peace and Justice

The sense that injustice is at the heart of the various ways that the Niger Delta and its people are suffering from what should be ordinarily a blessing cannot be missed from both primary data and published literature. It is vital to be reminded of Kalu Eme's comments in Chapter 4.5.5, which blames Niger Delta's problems on social injustice neglect (I33/2012/52).

These sentiments would find resonance with other commentators in this research (see *Appendix 2*). The sense that other regions in Nigeria have been developed by Nigeria's multi-billion petro-dollar income, while the Niger Delta is being denied the enjoyment of these benefits is vexatious and assaults all sense of equity. The late Ken Saro-Wiwa (1992) branded the environmental degradation in Ogoni as genocide against the people. A similar view was expressed by commentators such as Okonta & Douglas (2001:86, 269) who branded it an 'ecological warfare'.

Actually there is a different dimension to the problem in the sense of access to justice for individuals and communities who feel wronged. Engobo Emeseh (2011) lays down

some core principles that govern access to justice as those of equality and fairness. The main idea is actually not just about 'the establishment of, and the right of all to access, the formal institutions for dispute resolution, but also the content of the law themselves, and the enablement of individuals, financially and otherwise, to obtain justice through these institutions' (Emeseh, 2011:57). The denial of access to justice coupled with the atmosphere of lawlessness that ruled Nigeria, especially during the military era, could only lead aggrieved citizens to adopt extrajudicial (self-help) means to get redress as resentment, protests and resistance mounted (Omeje, 2006:10). This is a reason adduced for the rise of militancy in the Niger Delta, as ordinary citizens felt helpless in the face of a desensitised government (represented by a corrupt military and political elite) and uncaring business colossi. Furthermore, when the government used force to confront helpless and unarmed protesters who were seeking justice, it was a natural outcome that radical elements would resort to violence to counter state violence (Obi & Rustad, 2011:5-9).

The structure of laws, their interpretation, and the legal system within which they operate are as well fundamental to the recognition and respect of people's right, especially the notion of equality before the law (Ako, 2010). In Nigeria, as Andrew Apple highlighted earlier in this chapter, the 'Big Oga syndrome' allows some individuals to operate as if they are above the law (G24/2012/38). Laws such as the Petroleum Act (LFN, 2004) and the Land Use Act (LFN, 2004) have entrenched a sense of dispossession and exclusion in the Niger Delta. They, together, took control of land and its resources (in this case petroleum resources) from their traditional custodians in the community, and vested them on the state. Aggrieved people therefore feel helpless, with no recourse to a higher authority in a system they see as structurally unjust even in a democracy. Ako (2010:13) explains further that:

The non-existence of 'democratic institutions that convey a communal acknowledgement of equal individual worth' in Nigeria establishes the exploitation of resources from minority groups for national development without adequate (pecuniary) rewards. This, in turn, has spurred cultural differences and conflicts in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society

Furthermore the principle of derivation by which the income was shared has been tinkered downwardly over the years from fifty-fifty percentage share between the federal and regional governments to its present thirteen percent to the states (Obi & Rustad, 2011:6-7). Such sense of injustice is accentuated by the reality that other minerals such as gold, mined mostly in the north of Nigeria, are in private hands, and do not garner as much attention, and not subject to the same derivation principles, as oil.

Access to justice also relates to the confidence citizens have in their legal system. And although Nigerian judges could be adjudged as some of the boldest and freest, the system within which they work is thought to be corrupt and ineffective, with unnecessary delays (Ako, 2015:5). But some judges have delivered landmark judgments, including significant ones relating to the Niger Delta such as the one relating to decades long spillage in the Ejama-Ebubu community.

[In] July, 2010, almost ten years after the trial got underway, the Federal High Court of Nigeria sentenced Shell Nigeria to pay 100 million dollars in damages to the Ejama-Ebubu Community, and to restore the area to its original condition prior to the disaster for an oil spillage that occurred forty years earlier, in 1970 affecting 250,000 hectares (Pigrau, 2013:5).

For the above reasons, concerning access to justice and confidence in the Nigerian legal system, citizens and groups have from time to time sought extra-territorial legal jurisdictions, notably in the US and in the Netherlands, to adjudicate on matters involving the Nigerian State and the international oil companies. Antoni Pigrau (2013:5-6) has run a commentary on these cases which have had various degrees of success, while others were thrown out for lack of jurisdiction. In one instance,

supported by the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth in Nigeria (ERA/FoEN), three communities in the Niger Delta (Oruma, Goi and Ikot Ada Udo) brought a case against Royal Dutch Shell PLC and its Nigerian subsidiary the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of incidents of oil spillage. A district court in the Hague found the company and its subsidiary guilty of negligence in one of the three cases brought before it with regards to Ikot Ada Udo. Other landmark judgements from the angle of human rights include that of the ECOWAS²⁰ Court of Justice and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Both held Nigeria guilty of not respecting the human and environmental rights of their citizens, and failing to protect them from harm (Pigrau, 2013:5-6).²¹

The question is whether incidents of degradation and injustice in the Niger delta would subsist if oil was found in other parts of the country. Consequently, within that context of 'majority' versus 'minority' tribal politics in Nigeria Rhuks Ako (2010:5-6) raises the need for adequate recognition, respect, and participation of Niger Delta people in the Nigerian polity to be on equal terms. And Damilola Olawuyi (2013:286) sees participation as 'the right to take part in and to influence decision-making processes'. It is on these accounts that the Niger Delta people feel left out (Obi & Rustad, 2011:201).

²⁰ ECOWAS is the Economic Community of West African States

²¹ '[T]he African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted a decision in October 2001, in which they considered that Nigeria had violated the articles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, regarding the right to a decent environment, right of all people to control their natural resources, the right to health and the right to life, in relation to the Ogoni people, violations in which the Commission considered the involvement of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), in cooperation with SPDC has been demonstrated. On the other hand, in 2009 the Nigerian NGO Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) filed a lawsuit against Nigerian authorities and several oil companies, including Shell, for human rights violations committed in the Niger Delta region, before the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction in relation to the companies sued and the lawsuit was reformulated in 2011 against the Nigerian authorities (President and Attorney General). On September 14, 2012, the Court sentenced Nigeria for breaching the right to a decent environment, in relation to the breach of its obligations to adopt efficient measures to protect rights recognised under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, for non-compliance with its obligations to oversee activities of companies operating within its borders' (Pigrau, 2013:5-6).

As part of measures to address these problems, Ako (2010:13-1.4) suggests that 'some of the country's extant laws that regulate the oil industry perpetuate environmental injustices, as defined from an African perspective, on the Niger Delta. These laws must be revised to promote 'recognition', equity, and fairness; especially to curb the violent conflicts that have pervaded the area in the last decade'.

4.7 Conclusion

The need to permanently resolve the Niger Delta crisis cannot be overemphasised as cases of sabotage, bunkering, and general insecurity in the region have just begun escalating once again by formerly unknown militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (Patience, 2016). That, towards the end of 2016, seven years since the declaration of amnesty in 2009, cases of pipeline vandalism and the sabotage of other critical infrastructure has continued under the government of President Muhammadu Buhari is in itself very revealing.

The Nigerian government must rebuild trust with communities, broken by mutual suspicion and unfulfilled promises such as those related to the clean-up of the region and the provision of vital infrastructure. Since the quest for resource control by Niger Delta groups has not gone away, the government should revisit the derivation principle and open up constructive dialogue with the communities to arrive at an acceptable derivation principle. While it is important to not starve the government at the centre of funds, it is only a matter of equity and fairness that those who bear the brunt of degradation should as well have a greater share of the benefits to cover such fallouts.

These issues suggest that there is need to explore alternatives to the current remedies, especially those within religious and theological traditions. This is where the role of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria comes as a stakeholder in the society, especially in the

light of existing gaps regarding the earlier mentioned remedies proffered by other stakeholders. Consequently, the next chapter will examine the response of the PCN in the light of these problems.

CHAPTER FIVE: A DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONSE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA TO NIGER DELTA'S GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

I am not aware of any official role played by the church at any level – parish, presbytery, Synod or the GA [the General Assembly], in terms of maintaining the environment and all the issues that come from them (C9/2012/15).

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter (Five) addresses the unanswered question regarding the response of the PCN to Niger Delta's environmental. The above opening statement by one of the respondents, however, summarises what seems to be the general perception among Presbyterians in Port Harcourt about their church's involvement in promoting a sustainable environment. It also corroborates the claims of the Presbyterian Community Services and Development's (PCS&D)¹ that they have been unable to deliver the environmental programs they developed due to paucity of funds (I34/2012/55).

Going to the field to investigate how the PCN has responded to the issues described in both chapters three and four threw up some unexpected revelations. I was surprised to discover that the PCN has little direct intervention with the issues directly related to pollution from oil and gas. This is despite that the unanimous agreement of respondents (as described in chapter four) is that pollution from oil and gas production remains the most critical environmental problem suffered in the Niger Delta.

¹ PCS&D is the humanitarian and development department of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. This PCN-owned department acts as its non-governmental organisation (NGO), formulating and executing social and health projects such as those on women and youth empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention. In 2012 the Director Rev O. K. Iro said they are developing programs on environmental issues. These will be rolled out when funds are made available.

However, in the absence of direct action on the pollution from oil and gas, I instead discovered a narrative of broader engagement with issues of the environment. The implications of these action point to potentials that exist in the church for a robust involvement on any environmental intervention, including those related to oil and gas. It is because they are sufficiently intriguing that they have been given further exploration in this chapter. In addition, such engagement gives insight into how Presbyterians are making sense of the environmental challenges around them, and as well gives indication of the existing potentials on which the church can build for future action. These, as will be seen in the chapter, are taking place at both local and national levels of the church.

The chapter draws from qualitative field interviews from forty six participants and from surveys conducted in 2009, 2012 and 2016 to answer the core question: *How has the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria responded to Niger Delta's environmental problems?* It builds on the previous chapter which contain perspectives of the problems that are rendering the Niger Delta unsustainable. And although the engagement is not specific to the problems raised, it is an attempt at addressing environmental problems in the region from a broader perspective. These actions are an indication of the potentials that exist in the PCN, and also provide a stepping stone for a future, more systematic, intervention. Thus, the chapter is purely a description of the PCN's response to mostly general environmental issues in the Niger Delta and explores those potentials (if any) for engagement with issues of the environment at local and national levels.

5.2 Specific Actions of Local PCN Congregations

It also shows that not all the respondents had knowledge of their church's action in response to these issues, especially at the higher church echelons. They told stories of actions taken at the level of their local congregations. This sense of disconnect between the grassroots of the church and the General Assembly at the national level was particularly stark on the point of the intervention of the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D). While the PCS&D claims it has been carrying out Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) campaigns in the communities, no respondent mentioned the existence of any such activities in their area. This may be either because the PCS&D mounts its programmes without popular church grassroots participation, or that the scale is so limited the difference is not being felt. Either way there is a situation of clear miscommunication.

The different dimensions to the intervention of the PCN churches to the environmental problems cover a wide range. They are physical, economic, socio-political, cultural and theological dimensions. Physical Intervention covers all aspects of physical action taken by Presbyterians to remedy the problems found within their various communities. Not all the churches visited have done something at this basic level, though. Churches such as Diobu, Rumuomasi and Oyigbo which have carried out physical interventions seem to have done so as a result of their peculiar terrain. Dr C Nkire, (C10/2012/18-19) an elder and the Chairman of the Financial Board of Rumuomasi Parish, concedes that the efforts aimed at reclaiming their swampy terrain and filling up their flooded access road with hard earth was not due to altruistic reasons but for self-preservation. Nevertheless he says the actions have benefitted their neighbours.

Socio-political interventions are those efforts that involve the mobilisation of their communities to act together. While on one hand Presbyterians have periodically supported victims of natural disaster economically, on the other hand a cultural response has come in the form of their appeal to their cultural assets as Africans to make sense of the problems bedevilling their environment. In the same vein they did exhibit some profound theological understanding of the same issues.

The foregoing is therefore a summary of their intervention or response to the problems they have identified:

5.2.1 Lived example of keeping the environment clean

Presbyterian churches in the area have been modelling their concern for the environment by a lived example of keeping their own surroundings clean. They believe that the best way to lead the campaign for a wholesome environment is to show it practically. At Eleme Church members come out in their numbers during the monthly sanitation event to clean up their church, just as with the Oyigbo church. As has been pointed out earlier in this chapter the church's intervention has been carried out at the level of the local congregation, sometimes under the vanguard of its arms.²

Thinking theologically about this the rationale behind this regular cleaning exercise embarked by the church Mrs Ade Ango³ said it is to model the nature of God for the world to see. In an interview on 11 November 2012 she argued that 'when you think of

² Arms of the PCN are mostly gender-based sub-units of the congregation under which the social and service life of the church is organised. These groups help to ensure cohesion and order in the church and sometimes act as pressure groups within the PCN polity. All adult males of the church are expected to belong to the Men's Christian Association (MCA), while the women are organised under the Women's Guild. Young girls of the church are brought up under the Christian Girls in Training (CGIT). But the case of the youth wing of the church is different. They are organised under the Presbyterian Young People's Association of Nigeria (aka, PYPAN) and are the only mixed (male and female). They have administrative oversight provided for them at all tiers of the PCN government.

³ Mrs Ade Ango is a retired school principal and a PCN elder

the God you worship, you imagine everything around him must be very clean and then if you believe in him you would also want to keep up with a clean environment' (A1/2012/2). For that reason she has extended this environmental sanitation campaign to her neighbourhood as an active affirmation of her Christian faith. There, she has made efforts to engender a community spirit and through awareness creation has impressed it upon residents the benefit of a clean environment. But in frustration she says 'they [her neighbours] are not interested' (A1/2012/1).

5.2.2 Flood control and the Clearing up drainages

The stories told by members of the Presbyterian Church indicate that flooding is a real challenge. A number of them reported a flooding event that was said to have had a nationwide impact in 2012 besides the localised ones they experience from time to time. At Rumuomasi Parish where the church has suffered annual flooding the members, Mrs Marge Oba, Elder Omo Omoba, and Dr Chika Nkire,⁴ told of how the congregation has committed colossal sums of money to sand-fill the area with dry earth. This has ensured that both they and their neighbours continue to enjoy safe passage into their premises, and that lives and properties continue to be secure. Notwithstanding these efforts Dr Nkire still thinks 'the church has not caught on yet' with the environmental message (C10/2012/19). And although he believes that the church (the PCN) responds whenever there is flooding and other major disasters, yet that is always what it has been – a reactionary effort. The church in his view is neither proactive nor does it plan ahead in readiness for such emergencies.

⁴ Both Mr O Omoba and Dr C Nkire are ruling elders of the PCN at the same Rumuomasi Parish. While Omoba is the Chief executive of the Nigerian branch of an international Christian fellowship, Nkire is a medical doctor by profession and also holds the important post of chair of the Finance Board of his parish.

5.2.3 Road Rehabilitation

Rumuomasi and Woji churches once again present another feature of PCN's involvement in ameliorating issues of the physical environment, that is, road rehabilitation. On one hand it can be argued that road construction and rehabilitation is peripheral to ameliorating core environmental issues such as pollution caused by oil and industrial effluence. And while it may not be on the same scale as climate change and global warming, yet the impact of poor road networks on the environment and the people of the Niger Delta should not be underestimated. Diversions created by motorists at bad spots along the road become erosion tracks that worsen as the rains soften the loose exposed grounds.

At Rumuomasi the church has continually invested money to make their access road passable by pouring stones and crushed rock, especially during the raining season. The minister of Woji parish, Rev. Benedict Ndekor, likewise said that their church has carried out the road rehabilitation project in conjunction with the church's neighbours.

Thus this common problem became a rallying issue for the community. He said

Most of the time we contribute some money...to keep this place going. Sometimes we bring in bulldozers and tractors to grade the road when it is too bad we do that once in a while...The church gives the major part of the money and other people who contribute come from various compounds. They [the street association] have a secretary and president (G27/2012/43-44).

Beyond the immediate benefits of community cohesion and collaboration such actions create, they also become a platform on which the church can build further actions on core issues of the environment.

5.2.4 Community Mobilisation

In many ways Presbyterian churches are entrenching themselves as responsible corporate citizens according to the respondents. The instances of the interventions

highlighted above suggest that they are concerned about the wellbeing of their surroundings. More of the ways that they have been responsive to the needs around them therefore come in the form of social dialogue. Where it lacks extensive physical action the church's answer seems to revolve around issues of social mobilisation. This is perhaps a case of playing to their strength, using available skills to be a major factor in the community where they are. The cases of Rumuomasi and Woji parishes stand out as examples of the church making effort to be active in the community. In this regard there are two aspects of this engagement – they are the internal mobilisation of the church's own members and also the external mobilisation of the community to take action towards the environment.

5.2.4a Church Mobilisation

The primary means by which the PCN in this region has responded to the environmental challenges around them appears to be through the internal mobilisation of their members. This is through the arms and voluntary organisations within the local church. Normally there are four recognised arms – the Men's Christian Association (MCA), the Women's Guild (WG), and the youth represented by the Presbyterian Young People's Association of Nigeria (PYPAN). In addition there is also the specifically targeted group for young girls called Christian Girls in Training (CGIT). The group is vested with the task of the Christian education of the girl child in the church.

All the local churches were unanimous in their claim that they have been mobilising their members to boost participation in the state's monthly clean-up exercise. The Women's Guild and the youth are the most active groups in the church in this regard.

They clean the church premises on such days and maintain a regular cleaning rota among their members. This is in addition to cleaning their private living quarters.

The Women's Guild and the youth (PYPAN)⁵ take turns to keep the church compound clean. It is a testimony to their effectiveness that the churches visited during this research were all looking tidy. This cleaning arrangement probably follows on from the traditional role of women and children in the African family whose duty it is to keep the home clean, while the men go out hunting, gathering and fighting to protect their homes. But with the advent of modernity traditional roles are being challenged and perceptions are shifting to accommodate current realities in Africa. So we are beginning to find families where the breadwinner is the female instead of the male.⁶ Notwithstanding such societal changes, there is no clear indication of a wholesale reversal of roles, as experience shows that women are still largely the home-keepers. The church seems to be no different as the womenfolk and young people are still the ones who do regular sanitation. None of the respondents mentioned men in relation to the regular weekly clean-up exercise. The men weigh in when there is a major operation needing lifting and shifting heavy stuff, perhaps too during the monthly sanitation.

The challenge they face usually comes down to the availability of resources and how they are allocated. According to Dr Chika Nkire:

There are no resource materials for this. No special programs, talk or enlightenment about the environment. The church has not caught on yet...The resources of the church is such that when we are winning souls and all that, there is nothing left to talk about caring for the environment. The question is, are they doing enough even for their own surroundings? (C10/2012/Q12)

⁵ PYPAN stands for Presbyterian Young People's Association of Nigeria.

⁶ See Kalu (2006:203-240) for a fuller treatment of the changing scene of the African family and the modification of traditional roles.

So in addition to the need to mobilise the available manpower there seems a need to provide a well-structured program of enlightenment that will take advantage of the goodwill at the local level. Such will also ensure that the mobilisation of the local congregation becomes fruitful and goal-directed.

5.2.4b Wider Community mobilisation

There seem to be a recognition among Presbyterian churches that if any serious difference is to be made towards the achievement of a sustainable environment efforts must be made to build networks among the relevant stakeholders in their communities. Where Mrs Ango of MSMPN travelled in frustration (Int.A1/2012/Q12), the members of Rumuomasi seemed to have triumphed. Could it be because Mrs Ango was a lone voice versus her whole neighbourhood, and the Rumuomasi Church was acting together in concert with their own neighbours? Whatever the case they have presented a good example, as the earlier mentioned, of action taken in organising its neighbours to take action. They did this against an international hotel chain that built on a drainage channel. This obstruction has constituted serious flooding for residents and businesses in the area. When the local branch of this hotel chain bluffed and refused to act on the concern of neighbours the church made effort to contact their international partners. When all efforts failed they towed the path of civility and took the hotel to court, while resisting pressures from their neighbours who wanted the entire neighbourhood to fight with the representatives of the hotel group. Although they failed in their bid to persuade the court to compel the hotel to do something about the problem they created, they [the church and its neighbours] had made a strong point that little people can stand up to the high and mighty in society.

Incidentally, not long after that experience there was a fire incident that was precipitated by a fuel leak from the hotel's equipment. It destroyed neighbouring properties, and thankfully there were no loss of lives. But it took the efforts of the Fire Service to prevent the fire from spreading into other properties, including the church. This time the hotel was compelled to pay compensation to the affected residents for their recklessness.

At Woji parish Rev. Benedict Ndekor says that they (the church) initiated the reorganisation of their flagging Neighbourhood Association. The church's full involvement has ensured that it is working well again. Members of the association contribute money to take care of particular needs such as joint security and road maintenance, the church paying a greater share of the contribution. According to Barrister Anya the Church donates a substantial part of the contribution in order to ensure that the planned projects, especially the rehabilitation of the main access road, is executed without delay.

Even though the extent to which some of the actions taken by the church, such as road rehabilitation, can be said to be purely an environmental intervention is arguable, the impact it makes on the environment can be transforming. For example when roads become impassable to the motoring traffic drivers are forced to seek alternative routes. Such alternatives very often are diversions into virgin plots of land that sometimes turn out to be farm lands. Furthermore the aesthetics of the area is also destroyed when this occurs apart from the loss of valuable land for agriculture and other purposes.

5.2.5 Humanitarian Relief Action

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) has been good in the past with responding to humanitarian needs – locally, nationally and internationally. A good example was how they responded to the Asian Tsunami disaster of 2004 which devastated low-lying countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia.⁷ At that time I was still living and working in Nigeria and witnessed how all congregations of the PCN were rallied to raise relief for those affected. In keeping with that same selfless spirit Presbyterians responded massively to the widespread flood disaster in Nigeria of 2012. This was the broad experience of the respondents in this research.

Rev. Benedict Ndekor (G27/2012/45) narrates how a local flood disaster of 2011 that affected members was handled despite the bureaucratic bottlenecks in the church system.

In fact, they could not worship on one Sunday. Then at Bayelsa station one of the key members we have there is an indigene. He even bought a mission car for them. Some body, an Elder there lost his house. His house was completely submerged. So they raised an appeal through the Synod to the GA. So while the GA was still deliberating on what do to the Synod took it up and said, “what can we do? Let us raise one million Naira”

Although it can be argued that such humanitarian relief action is not particularly a direct environmental action, but we have seen in chapter two that the factors that

⁷ The National Geographic has called this Boxing Day 2004 disaster as the *The Deadliest Tsunami in History?*

The earthquake that generated the great Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 is estimated to have released the energy of 23,000 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

Giant forces that had been building up deep in the Earth for hundreds of years were released suddenly on December 26, shaking the ground violently and unleashing a series of killer waves that sped across the Indian Ocean at the speed of a jet airliner.

By the end of the day more than 150,000 people were dead or missing and millions more were homeless in 11 countries, making it perhaps the most destructive tsunami in history.

The epicenter of the 9.0 magnitude quake was under the Indian Ocean near the west coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, according to the USGS, which monitors earthquakes worldwide. The violent movement of sections of the Earth's crust, known as tectonic plates, displaced an enormous amount of water, sending powerful shock waves in every direction.

See http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/12/1227_041226_tsunami.html. Accessed 16/09/2014.

have led to the current state of unsustainability are multidimensional and not just physical factors. And the fact remains that human beings are a part of God's creation and should receive help whenever there is a disaster that affects creation. In reality, such line of thought buttresses the point that the welfare of human being is directly connected to the wellbeing of the entire cosmos. Whatever affects the ecosystem on which we depend would impact on life generally including that of human beings who depend on the fruits of the earth. In Dr Chika Nkire's view 'God gave man the environment as a legacy to support him and give him all he needs. We depend on the environment, and our survival depends on it' (C10/2012/Q5). The problem with an aspect of his view however is the thought that creation is primarily to satisfy human needs, without an intrinsic value of its own.

5.2.6 Court Action

In a context of extreme violence and social upheaval it becomes significant when it is realised that the church held up to the standards of civility by taking the alleged polluter to court, rather than succumbing to self-help. One of the elders at Rumuomasi was eloquent in stating this when he said, 'we have championed more peaceful way of championing our grievances, although some of our neighbours wanted us to go and fight, we said, No.' (C9/2012/Q13). Thus, the parish seems to have put civic responsibility at the forefront of its action of mobilising the community for action against the degradation of their environment. Even though this is in no way a novel action, however it appears to model and re-emphasise the need for communities and the youth of the Niger Delta to follow due process and the rule of law. The courts should be seen as the proper avenue to channel their grievances not violence.

The implication of the above measure by the church is its capacity to curb the employment of extreme measures by agitators, such as the destruction of oil installations in the name of protest. Such acts of sabotage have direct consequences on the environment as oil and gas products leak into the water and land, and thus endangering human, plant and aquatic life.

5.2.7 Economic Empowerment

The living stories at the beginning of this chapter show that whenever the land suffers the people suffer with it, as the two are intricately linked. It therefore follows that any investment on the land should conversely be an investment on its people. A member of the Woji parish of the PCN argues that a failure to do so is actually a disservice against ourselves, this is because ‘...if mosquitoes bite you while you are saving souls, for crying out loud you are going to have Malaria. If you help people clean their gutter you are impacting on their environment’ (G23/2012/Q6). The other benefit arising from action on the environment, she says, is that the church will reap a harvest of souls. This is because the people will know that it cares when the church confronts issues that give them concern (G23/2012/Q5).

As earlier discussed in this chapter the main economic action that the PCN has mounted in response to the environmental crisis is basically related to the relief fundraising it embarked upon to help members who were inundated by the flood water. While looking out for their members is commendable, not showing the same practical concern for the plight of the larger public beyond its walls raises the question about how caring the church is. In what ways is the church showing itself as the salt of the earth and a light to the world? How is it healing the land and bringing comfort to the hurting people of the Niger Delta?

5.3 Cultural Reflection

One of the concerns raised by PCN members during the interviews was the manner that changing cultural beliefs have impacted on the values of the people. They see the erosion of moral values as the genesis of a lot of evil in the society, including the lack of concern for the environment. The argument is that if people live selfishly they cannot keep Christian tenets such as to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

Apart from lamenting the current negative cultural development in the society these PCN members suggested ways by which they are making sense of the situation. They seem to believe that the idea of responsibility to the environment is supported by abundant local wisdom imbedded in the people's sayings. Some respondents volunteered proverbs that show that caring for the environment has until the recent aberrations been the people's normal way of life. One proverb that occurred frequently during the interviews was the Igbo proverb, *ebe onye bi ka O na awachi*, which Elder Omo Omoba translates to mean that 'where you live is where you protect'. This in his view presupposes that 'it becomes our responsibility to protect our environment, because if we don't protect our environment we won't do well' (C9/2012/Q3).

Besides the use of traditional proverbs to undercore the need to take care of the environment, they also employed one that was common in the Western world, which is, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness'. This proverb was employed fifteen times by eleven respondents (by A1; B5; C9; D16; D17; E18; H28; H32, twice; K38, twice; K43, thrice; and K45). As Christians, they see concern for the environment as an outflow of their faith.

5.4 The Responses of the General Assembly of the PCN

In addition to the actions taken by the congregation at the grassroots the General Assembly of the church and the regional Synods have as well been responding to the Niger Delta crisis.

5.4.1 Press Release and Communiques

One major forms of social engagement of the Christian church in Nigeria is speaking truth to civil authorities. The Nigerian government and the general public are engaged through various mass media resources, including posters, banners, handbills, press statements and communiques. The PCN and its units (including local churches) use banners, posters and handbills to herald the start of a major campaign or conferences. The higher courts of the church (Synods and the General Assembly) are particularly known to release statements and communiques at the end of every major conference. Usually they carry the summary of the meeting's major resolutions, especially the aspects that relate to the prevailing situation in the society, and thus bringing a prophetic message to the nation.

Given the prohibitive cost of placing advertorials in national newspapers it is not surprising that it is the General Assembly, its Executive Committee (GAEC), and the regional synods that can afford such public statements. However Mr Andrew Apple, a member of Woji Parish of the PCN laments the obscure positioning of such advertorial statements. He criticizes the PCN as being timid in its public presentations, as it chooses probably the cheapest and most obscure corner of the national daily to publish such releases. He wonders whether the church is afraid of becoming a target in the highly charged security atmosphere of the Niger Delta (G24/2012/Q16).

A general survey of the Nigeria Christian landscape would yield the fact that other Churches and Church leaders do also issue statements, communiqués, and related comments from time to time. Some of these happen particularly whenever there is a crises or after a major meeting or conference. Such actions of the church finds acknowledgement in the wider public as has been attested to by a prominent community leader. The problem however is that such comments are what they are – just comments. Prof K Okoko of the Ijaw National Congress (INC) and Barrister S. Igbara of the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) claim that there is usually not enough concerted pressure from the church on the government and those responsible for the environmental degradation to change their ways (J35/2012/57-58; K43/2009/63-64). As a result they believe things have remained unchanged.

But Monsignor Cyprian Onwuli⁸ thinks the underlying factor responsible for the seeming inaction is more serious and more nuanced than that. He believes that the state of insecurity leaves many pastors afraid for their lives and consequently they do not risk been seen as outspoken (K46/2009/65). Such fears of threat to life cannot be discountenanced as it had already been highlighted earlier in this chapter how the state of insecurity of life and property disrupted normal life, and as such is a hindrance to meaningful dialogue between parties. In their opinion the Church could not engage with issues of the environment, even if they wanted. It is not surprising then why observers have the impression of apathy on the part of the church and its leaders, even though their silence is broken by the periodic statements and communiques. Could this lack of engagement be a sign of poor preparation and inadequate resources?

⁸ Monsignor Onwuli is the Dean of the Port Harcourt Catholic Diocese, and the Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Rivers State

5.4.2 The Heritage of an Established and Tested Church Structure

The Part 'G' of the Practice and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) deals mostly with its polity - the form of governance, its court system, its officers, and so on. For a church that has been established for over one hundred and seventy years (1846-2016) it will be preposterous to imagine that it does not have a tried and tested system of governance. The PCN delights in its democratic and hierarchical court structures that rise from the Session (as the court of first instance) at the grassroots, to the General Assembly (as the Supreme Court) at the apex.⁹ For more on the church structures and their respective functions see the practice and procedures of the church (P&P G.05-G.07).

In addition to the Presbyterian form of government, PCN structures provide the template for organising the church administration via boards, directorates, departments and desks. It is interesting that some respondents cited problems with the structures of the Presbyterian Church as one of the hindrances to PCN's action on the environment. These will be discussed further in Chapter Six, but Rev. Benedict Ndikor, a minister of the church, posits that 'GA structures make response to issues very slow' (G27/2012/45), while Mrs Chika Uka, an elder of the church, laments that the constraint rather than the church is 'busy with our mechanical orders' (G24/2012/34).¹⁰

On both counts the respondents were not happy that there were bureaucratic bottlenecks that constrained decision-making in the church. These commentators give the impression that the church's structures are a burden instead of an asset. Could it rather be the case of how the structures of the church are operated, than with the structures themselves? Actually, the court system¹¹ ensures that information flows,

⁹ The court system ensures that of first instance is the Session which represents one or more congregations that form a parish, then a number of parishes, form the Presbytery which is the court for appeals and district administration. Above the presbyteries are regional Synods, which are comprised of all presbyteries within its bounds. And then the General Assembly is the highest (supreme) court of the Church.

¹⁰ The former was with respect to the GA's humanitarian response to members who suffered in the flood crisis, while the latter has to do with response to mobilising the church youth as a tool for community engagement.

¹¹ The four tiers of Presbyterian Church government run in the PCN are constituted as ecclesiastical courts, with sole jurisdiction over matters reserved for its level of operation. The processes flow from the Session at the lowest (Parish) level to the Presbytery, and then to the regional Synod. Finally, the General

down and up, through the system quite easily. Observers of the church admire the structures and grassroots reach of the church. In addition they think that the church external networks can serve its local engagement. E J Alagoa encourages churches to reach out, saying that ‘they have the structures and will be more effective and will give a great boost’ (K42/2009/64).

However, an outside observer, S K Igbara (J35/2012), who at the time of the interview in 2012 was the national Legal Adviser of MOSOP,¹² adduces a different perspective to the argument about church structures. He posits that, ‘the church is in a unique position [to intervene], in the sense that policy makers belong to the church. The people in the community they belong to the church. So if the church is serious, advocacy can start in the church, to talk to these people who are policy makers who will go there and make changes, and enforce the laws’ (J35/2012/57). This insight, even though not entirely novel, should give church leaders the realisation that they have policy-makers as their captive audience. However, Rev Kalu Eme of the PCN directorate of Information and Public Affairs laments that the problem is not that church leaders are not speaking out, but that civil authorities are not taking heed (I33/2012/54).

The PCN (2013:4-7) Diary and Directory lists some functional boards and directorates that could be useful for any meaningful environmental outreach. They are the Board of Faith and Order BFO to domesticate any theological framework. The Board of Personnel and Training to design a curriculum of training fresh ministers at all PCN theological colleges to ensure that trainee ministers are equipped to face contemporary mission challenges, including the creation care. They will also create refresher programs for already ordained ministers to bring them up-to-date with these current trends. The Directorate for Lay Development and Leadership Training (DLDLT), and the church’s NGO called Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCD&D). Of all these the PCS&D is the most suitable to anchor the church’s environmental program, for the following reasons:

Assembly serves as the supreme court of the church. Appeals are entertained along these hierarchical structures until the apex court gives its final ruling.

¹² MOSOP stands for the Movement of the Survival of Ogoni People

1. It has a track record for delivering professionally packaged charity projects, such as HIV/AIDS intervention involving voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), and campaigns against stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS sufferers (see the website: <http://pc-sd.org/>).
2. It has delivered Women Empowerment Programs in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (see *Appendix 3*)
3. It has developed a vital Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) framework that can be deployed in future environmental projects (see *Appendix 4*). Stage 1 – Advocacy With Gate Keepers; Stage 2 – Community Dialogue; Stage 3 – Community Mobilization For Behaviour Change; and Stage 4 – Monitoring And Evaluation.
4. Plus they have been trained in the art and processes of vying for funding for their projects, from both local and international donors. A skill vital for their ability to sustain any long-term project

But their work on the environment would be effective if they worked in conjunction with other departments, especially the Directorate for Lay Development. In short, it requires a cross-departmental effort.

5.4.3 The Gift of its historic Reformed Liturgy

Another important gift that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria brings into the environmental discourse is its liturgy¹³ based on its Presbyterian and Reformed traditions which are clearly stated in its governing document, the Practice and Procedure (P&P G-02). The Presbyterian Church's *Book of Services* contains several templates of worship services that lend themselves to emphasise the care of God's creation, notably: a Planting Service and a Harvest Thanksgiving Service (PCN, 1992:416-433).

¹³ Liturgy is derived from the Greek root word *leitourgia*, which comprises two words, *leitos* (pertaining to the people) and *ergon* (work). In other words liturgy is basically the work or service of the people rendered to God or His people (Fubara-Manuel, 2014:160; Milne, 1982:222).

Also, the dynamism imbedded in the PCN's reformed ethos, as a church that is always reforming, makes it amenable to meet the needs of every generation (P&P G-02.0203). Moreover, the church has expressed (in print) its willingness to revise its liturgy and the *Book of Services* (P&P G-13.0305.d [3]; PCN, 1992:viii). But for the church to effectively and successfully engage with issues of the environment it has to liberate these received documents and traditions, especially its liturgy from the burden of tradition and mechanical worship to make it a living document that transforms the life of the worshipping community. All of these give the church a viable entry point and a strong basis for the development of a specific liturgy for creation care.

It also validates the idea God's continuous revelation today by His Holy Spirit that illuminates the written word. Nevertheless, Hendrikus Berkhof (1979:58), Michael Weinrich (2000:2, 85-87), and BF Fubara-Manuel (2007:199-206) agree that, such fresh revelation or inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to be rooted in the word of God – the bible. From the above understanding, the liturgy should therefore, create a living communion between the worshipping community and its Lord, Jesus Christ (the head of the Church). Each encounter with the risen Christ should prepare and propel the church to serve in the community.¹⁴ Consequently, the PCN emphasises the unity between truth and goodness, saying:

'we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover the truth or to embrace it' (P&P, G-01.0304).

¹⁴ The motto of Christ Church in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, is illustrative of this notion. It reads: 'Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve'. Christ Church, Port Harcourt, is an interdenominational worship centre that draws its pastoral ministry from the ecumenical partnership of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican denominations. These churches appoint ministers and their deputies to Christ Church (and its outpost in Yenagoa (Bayelsa State) on rotational basis.

Furthermore the PCN charges believers to make each day count for God, and not just the day of worship. Particularly they are to match their profession of the faith with daily action in the community, saying:

This ethos is a challenge to Reformed believers today to take seriously not only Sunday worship services, but also the regular weekly activities of their churches and to radiate the fruits of these moments with God in the life of their communities and in care for creation (P&P, W1.3001).

The closing words of the above statement is a further clear manifestation of the PCN love for God's creation and its desire to see its members engage with it positively. The internal structure of the PCN liturgy gives a hint as to how pragmatic and functional the act of worship was meant to be – a living experience with the liturgical rubric – not a cold, dead document on tablet of stone. The clue is in its internal organisation in three principal segments – the *Approach*, the *Word*, and the *Response*. These correspond to a traditional Western three-course meal – the appetizer, the main meal, and the dessert.

In the *Approach*, the congregation is ushered into the presence of God through opening sentences, hymns, songs and prayer, as it were, to whet their spiritual appetite. Then, the *Word* of God (as the main meal) is expounded.¹⁵ A combination of the first two segments empowers and challenges the faithful into practical responses as they are led or convicted by the Holy Spirit. This, as mentioned earlier, will include the care for creation (P&P, W1.3001). In other words, no worship service is complete without a holistic tri-dimensional emphasis – of ministering to the spirit, soul (intellect

¹⁵ The structure of the PCN liturgy also highlights the reformed ethos of the word of God being the supreme rule of faith – everything in worship leads to the word and our reaction or response flows from it. Being properly sandwiched in the middle or heart of worship – makes it the rich, healthy and worthwhile experience it is meant to be. And so any liturgy on creation must lead to a personal and corporate soul-searching that propels the church to take action on the various environmental challenges confronting our communities – at local and global levels. Any effective action would therefore have to start with a revision and re-visioning of our worship life.

and mind), and body – the last aspect leads to a responsive action on the part of the worshipping community.

The PCN liturgy actually incorporates elements that affirms creation. The P&P sheds light on the aspects of the order of service that emphasises a holism that incorporates creation, just as Jesus in His incarnation identified with His own creation, when it says:

Worshiping God in spirit and in truth does not nullify the use of created elements in worship, rather it affirms them. In taking on human form in his incarnation; in healing with elements of creation such as earth, spittle and water; in teaching with human language and illustrating with natural elements like trees, and stones; in ministering to the physical hunger of people with bread and fish; in ascending to glory in human form; Jesus hallowed material reality. The Reformed tradition recognizes this but has often cautioned against the temptation to idolatry that is often associated with unchecked freedom with material elements in worship. It has, therefore, limited itself to material elements that Jesus has commanded to be used. It is for this reason that it does not encourage the use of anointing oil, holy water, holy candle, holy incense, anointed handkerchief, etc. It has rather held strongly to the ethos of simplicity both in liturgy and in personal life (P&P, W-1.4001).

The above statement represents the PCN as a denomination that is creation-affirming, and that has ready structures to launch a robust environmental mission. Indeed this portion of the P&P argues that this has always been the view of the Reformed tradition. However, it still remained authentically Reformed in its expression by cautioning against any hint of idolatry.

Where might the PCN look for added resources to help it in the process of working out a liturgy for creation? As a starting point it might be useful to look at the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) which has some liturgical templates.¹⁶ Actually, the *Book of Services* acknowledges that it is a product of multiple inspiration, drawing from several streams of global Christian experience across denominations (PCN, 1992:v-vi).¹⁷ Troy Messenger believes such transformation through liturgical

¹⁶ See <http://www.ecen.org/content/creation-time>. Accessed 12/04/2016

¹⁷ These are its traditional partners such as the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and also from distant fraternal partners in parts of Africa, America, India, and so on. All these

engagement demands a rethinking and revisioning of our received other-worldly traditions, for an earth-centred theology (Messenger, 2001:174).

Another example in liturgical and ecclesiological brinkmanship is the manner that the Connecticut Diocese of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church has been able to build church's concern for creation, through its Five Marks of Mission, into its catechumen and liturgy. In order to drive the culture of concern for the environment into its membership it recreated those five marks of mission as the *Five Baptismal Marks of Mission*,¹⁸ as follows:

- Worship & Prayer
- ✓ Teaching, baptizing and nurturing new believers
- Repentance & Forgiveness
- ✓ Resisting evil and safeguarding the integrity of creation
- Evangelism
- ✓ Proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ
- Service
- ✓ Responding to human need by loving service
- Justice & Peace
- ✓ Seeking to transform unjust structures of society and challenging violence

The above craftsmanship of the liturgy was done to help local congregations to reflect on them in worship. It is a brilliant idea to especially orientate those preparing for baptism to have a broader perspective of the church's mission that embraces all elements (including the fifth mark dealing with the care of creation), instead of the narrow traditional understanding which limits mission to evangelism. Other resources, such as bible studies have also been produced to teach members at the grassroots.

streams of inspiration (and others acknowledged in the PCN Book of services) make the document a truly global instrument of worship. The Book of Services also draws from other distant fraternal partners such as the Church of South India, the Presbyterian Churches of England and Wales, the Congregational Church of England and Wales, and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, and the United Reformed Church (URC). Interestingly at the time of writing this thesis I am serving currently as a minister of the URC, one of the churches they drew from. And closer home it turned to the following churches for inspiration: Ekklesiyar Yanuwa a Nigeria, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (PCN 1992:v-vi).

¹⁸ In its website the Diocese says: 'The Five Baptismal Marks of Mission were created by the Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas in October 2012 and shared in his Address to the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. They combined the Anglican "marks" with the promises of the Baptismal Covenant'. Available at: <https://www.episcopalct.org/Beliefs-and-Practices/Five-Marks-of-Mission/>. Accessed June, 2016.

The idea of revisiting the liturgy as the embodiment and vehicle for worship, that leads the people of God into the work of caring for God's creation, is neither the setting aside of historic Presbyterian ethos, nor of changing the very act of worship. But a rejigging of the liturgical corpus will reform and reposition it (the liturgy) to serve its intended purpose as a vehicle that ushers the community of faith into God's presence. From my experience as a PCN minister, I can say that this reformation has already been in force in the church, and is organically transforming PCN congregations.¹⁹ At present it needs to focus attention on the care of creation from a holistic perspective. The question remains why the church has not articulated, with these resources, a coherent local and holistic ecotheology of sustainability. Its current actions are not concrete or adequate but there is potential for improvement.

5.4.4 Public Health Education

Where the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has been deficient in core environmental action it has been very active with regards to the provision of health services. In deed the church's mission history from inception has had facets of western medicine, education and evangelism at its core. Up till the present time the Presbyterian Joint Hospital in Uburu Ohaozara in Ebonyi has for a while enjoyed the status of a tertiary health institution under the Ebonyi State University medical school. There are other

¹⁹ Ogbu Kalu (2008:234) credits this transformation to the evangelical and charismatic movements that brought revival to the country just before, during and immediately after the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Eventually, the youth of the church who were influenced by groups such as the Scripture Union and the Charismatic Movement of that era brought back their experience to the church. While other denominations embraced these movements the PCN initially opposed it, but it relented as the tide proved unstoppable. The trend of lively worship and preaching also took hold as younger and more dynamic, secular-university, graduate-ministers were added to the corpus of pastoral ministry. These days the employment of loud collective prayers, the live band and celebratory worship is common in most Presbyterian congregations in Nigeria. Sometimes, the mode of worship is indistinguishable from Pentecostal worship, as there is free use of glossolalia (speaking in unknown tongues), thanks to the charismatic fervour championed by the late Rev Dr James Ukaegbu in the 1980s and 90s.

PCN established health facilities in neighbouring Abia, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.

The above scenario may have been responsible for the focus given to the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (as well known as Presby-Aids) at inception. The name Presby-Aids is self-explanatory as it started as an HIV/AIDS epidemic intervention in the 1990s and has now branched into other areas of social, political and economic empowerment. The national Director, Rev Okechukwu Iro, claims that the group has prepared core environmental interventions, waiting for funds to implement them. The frequent mention of this charity by interviewees shows that members of the church are well aware of its activities. But such awareness is still limited to the organisation's core health action, and not related to any environmental intervention.

One of PCS&D's cornerstone activities is the annual Health Week which emphasises issues of public health. Although the topics covered are mainly health-related interviewees agree that they have from time to time projected the need for a healthy environment as a necessity for healthy bodies. That, is the argument of Rev Iro who says that:

there must be a motivation. We think that if somebody's health is involved, somebody's life is involved somebody will be motivated to carry out an intervention or an activity. That is why we are looking at it from there. For instance in most of our behaviour change communication materials we highlight the benefit to your health and then tell you what to do. The most important thing is not from which angle, but we want you to keep your environment clean. If we tell you that the environment that is dirty is likely to kill you and you want to live, you will do anything possible to live (I34/2012/Q1).

One criticism that Rev Dr Cheetham West levelled against this PCN's flagship development arm is that of the monetisation of its operations. By this it is meant the tradition of using its activities as a fundraising avenue. In so doing the basic message it is trying to put across seems to lose its focus and impact. I experienced first-hand the

struggle ministers face to remit their parish financial quota as demanded by higher church authorities, not excluding the resource materials distributed by the PCS&D and other Church departments during special events.

During the health week leaflets and study materials are sent to all congregations across the country with strict instructions to the minister to account for the remittance on them. The day of reckoning comes when ministers seek clearance at the end of their tenure in a local church. They are refused posting letters to their prospective stations until they have paid all outstanding monies. Adopting such harsh means of fundraising may not be unconnected with the budget constraints of the church and its organisations, including the PCS&D. However it poses serious vulnerability to ministers to account for something that is strictly not under their purview. Sometimes parish finance offices decide to withhold such remittances in order to create problems for some ministers they have issues with. This then raises the question of the morale and loyalty of church workers and their members. Buttressing this point and the effect it is having on the people at the grassroots Cheetham-West laments that the issue is quite critical because,

everything we tend to come up with ends up with how much money it is bringing. And I think that is the death of most of those things. Every congregation is crying out there is no money again. Everything eventually ends up with how much money will it bring? AIDS, how much money? (Int.D17/2012/Q7).

5.5 Theological Reflections amid the Engagement

The seriousness of the Niger Delta environmental crisis has forced the church to begin reflecting theologically on the issues. The evidence of this reflection can be seen in the depth and breadth of contributions of both the ministers and their members. It was therefore important to see how ordinary Presbyterians were navigating the rough

waters of theology to make sense of the environmental challenges facing them. It is striking that there is no strong link between these theological reflections and the actions (or even inaction) of the church. So it is arguable how these thoughts have so far underpinned their response to the crisis. Moreover, a further interrogation of the data, in conversations with two key officers of the church, Okechukwo Iro and Kalu Eme, confirms that these are unco-ordinated reflections, and not a systematic construct of the Presbyterian Church (I34/2016/55 and I35/2016/57)²⁰.

This lack of a clear ecotheological position is compensated by the idea of theology from below that will emanate hopefully from the contours of their praxis within the community of believers. It is left to be seen how such a theology will look. Meanwhile, the data suggests that churches are tackling the problems and engaging their members and the public through their sermons, bible studies and teachings. Ere Oba confirm that the church has used its influence from the pulpit to encourage change. During the days of militancy his parish minister, as an example, preached to dissuade young people from recruitment into the armed groups (C13/2012/22).

The range of theological themes that emerged from the interview and the questionnaire data encompassed a broad range of Christian theology – creation, the fall, redemption, and eschatology – and some of those thoughts were truly profound (as seen in the ensuing section). Again the benefit of such exercise was perhaps that it gave members of the PCN the opportunity to reflect on what might be the proper theological response as Christians. Nevertheless, being their personal stories it reflects

²⁰ Both are the PCN Directors of the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D) and the Director of Communication and Public Affairs, respectively.

what has been the undergirding motivation for their action as individuals, if not corporately as a church.

The scattered pieces of evidence of subliminal theological reflections among Presbyterians as they engaged with issues of the environment have been pulled together in this research from raw qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaire) data in Appendices 1 and 2. They have been presented in this chapter in a coherent manner to form parts of the building blocks for constructing the local holistic ecotheology in chapter seven.

5.5.1 The Theological Views of PCN members from the Interview Results

The array of theological themes that emerged from the interview data encompassed the broad spectrum of traditional Christian theology, namely:

5.5.1.1 Creation:

Presbyterians hold firmly to the conviction that the environment is God's creation and a gift from him. Chika Nkire (C10/2012/Q5) emphasised this view in a preceding comment (in Chapter 5.2.5), in which he sees creation as God's gift to humanity to provide all necessities and support. Maxwell Alwell (H30/2012) elaborated on this view, but from a strong utilitarian angle, when he said that,

[In] 2nd Peter, the Bible says, He [God] has given us things pertaining to life and Godliness. Ephesians 1:3, says I [God] have given you all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. So it is our duty to possess it. Genesis 1 says, We should have dominion over all things...it is our duty to possess it...we should have dominion...our duty is to start taking it – natural minerals, the vegetation, the fruits – everything has been made available, so we should have them' (H30/2012/Q2).

It will, however, be worrisome if Alwell's statement about human beings taking possession of creation (H30/2012/Q2) equates to the same human-centred

domination of nature which has raised criticism about Christianity's perceived complicity in the destruction of nature (White, 1967).²¹

It is for such concerns that Chika Nkire underscores the need for the protection of the environment, reminding us pointedly that, 'We depend on the environment, and our survival depends on it' (C10/2012/Q5). This, invariably, means that, if humanity fails to care for the environment, they will only be destroying their own support structures. Bona Ndekor (G27/2012) emphasised that human beings are to discharge this caretaker function conscientiously, following God's directives. He says,

In the creation story in the Bible, Genesis Chapter 2, God took the man whom He made and put in the garden to tend and keep it. So you see God Himself as the first environmentalist. The man was not supposed to be idle. Even before he created man he first of all made the garden ready for him so God wanted the man to be busy from day One. And he told him practically "your assignment is to tend and keep this garden". So that puts man in charge of the created order. You should not watch things just go any how without showing some concern and take it up as your own responsibility and doing something to better the place (G27/2012/Q7).

Without using the word, Ndikor's comments are stewardship laden, and is supported by India Ume (B2/2012) of MSMPCN, who makes a strong case for human responsibility over creation as its 'tenders'. Contextualising his case within the Niger Delta environmental experience, Mr Ume laments that God's creation is being destroyed by human action:

when we take the first sentence of the bible about [the creation of] Heaven and Earth, you can see order there, and he [God] went on to put those things...for the six days of creation, and he rested and blessed what he had created and handed over to man to tend...What have we done [in the Niger Delta]? We have destroyed it by our action (B2/2012/Q4).

All these views are in tandem with familiar biblical passages on creation such as Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, and Psalm 24:1-2. They make a case for God's

²¹ This view of ecology is commonly known as 'anthropocentrism', and has led people like to the accusation that Christianity is the root of the world's ecologic crisis (White, 1967).

authorship/ownership of creation, and of human responsibility as caretakers and stewards of creation.

5.5.1.2 The Fall

Chiamaka Ukia of Diobu Parish brings in the dimension of human sin and its impact on creation, opining that:

In Genesis when God created the earth, he gave us order through Adam and Eve concerning the environment...saying that the environment is meant to be comfortable... if not that they sinned and disorganized it. (B6/2012/Q1).

For Miss Ukia, the sense of wholeness that existed in creation was disrupted when our first parents (Adam and Eve) sinned. In short, she believes that, God created the earth to be good and comfortable, but human sin has spoilt or 'disorganized' it. She echoes Mr India Ume's earlier comments in the preceding Section 5.5.1.1, in which he laments that human beings have, by their actions, destroyed what God 'had created and handed over to man to tend...' (A2/2012/Q4).

Ume captures vividly the negative impact of reckless human actions on the erstwhile pristine Niger Delta environment. While lamenting the specific roles of the government and the people in this chaotic transformation of the region's environment asserts that,

The environment is a living thing...If you have altered it, you should alter it for a [good] purpose. But the altering can end up in disordering, and that disordering ends you in a mess (A2/2012/Q3).

The implication, therefore, is that creation is fragile, and needs to be treated with due care, respect and sensitivity.

5.5.1.3 Redemption

On the grounds of God's salvific intervention through Christ, Mr India Ume believes that 'God has renewed the earth' (A2/2012/Q8). For this reason he does not believe

that the world, as presently constituted, will be completely destroyed or annihilated at the end of time. Thus, he believes in a continuity theology, which is at variance with the majority view of Presbyterians, who believe (from the survey result) that the earth will someday be destroyed (Chapter 5.5.2). In addition, Mrs Ade Ango views the earth as planned for 'a temporary stay' (A1/2012/Q1).

Oscar Alaba adds another dimension that, Christ's redemptive act was not just for human beings, but for all creation. He believes in what he calls the 'full gospel', and decries any attempt by Christians in Nigeria to dichotomise the essence of the Gospel (Good News). He explains that,

The full gospel should be able to address the soul and environment where somebody stays...if the church is concentrating on winning souls and we are careless about the environment then it shows that we are not really following the master [Jesus]' (H32/2012/Q6).

On that same note, Mr Festus Karl, of the Bori congregation, emphasises that, the gospel is not mere talk, but about living the 'good news' and influencing neighbours in practical ways. For example, he says, that

Since the bible enjoins us to be good to our neighbours, I think something like picking up our brooms and organising a group to take care of the environment, will be nice. At least some day they [neighbours] will move into the town and do something [too] (E18/2012/Q3).

This method of sharing the gospel, which combines practical action and proclamation, is akin to the injunction of Jesus to, 'let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven' (Matt. 5: 16). Jesus gave us the good example of incarnational living, by coming and living among his own creation.

5.5.1.4 Eschatology

The data indicates that the opinion of Presbyterians is that the earth is a preparatory ground for believers, before their onward journey to a permanent abode in heaven. Consequently, Dr Nkire uses a well-known local cliché to admonish Christians to 'not

be too heavenly minded that you become earthly useless' (A1/2012/Q1). In other words, believers should first be actively involved in God's mission in the present life and not be paralysed by concerns about the afterlife. He affirms that 'God meant for us to enjoy here [on earth] and also in heaven.' Thus, there is a future place of abode (heaven) for God's people. Mrs Ade Ango admonishes that, in the meantime,

We should make the place [earth] habitable and comfortable. We know it's a temporary stay but we should do our best (A1/2012/Q1)

With respect to what happens to the earth at the close of time, India Ume posits that,

I don't think that the earth will be destroyed. Because somewhere in the Bible we were told that God promised that the earth won't be destroyed. I see the earth as an infinite object, it is just infinite. It is only the activities of men that are finite that come to an end, and then a new life begins. I am hoping that when man resurrects to see an earth that has been purified then he will thank God for those who used his words to create a name. But it should be in our hearts and mind to build on that which God handed to us (A2/2012/Q6).

Although he could not quote the exact bible passage he was referring to, he argues for continuity and not the cessation of creation. Nevertheless, Ume believes in stewardship and accountability, therefore, he says the day of reckoning is coming when God will judge all things. He then suggests that what we need, in order to tackle the environmental problems in the Niger Delta, is to go back to the word of God and recover what he calls 'a functional religion'.

A functional religion should lead us to his [God's] creation, his reign and everything. When that is done perhaps the word of God would have impacted on the listener. Now people only come to the house of God just to be momentarily relieved of the problems that they face. And once they get out of the church they face problems that will toss them back to where they were. And so the word loses value as soon as they come out of the church. And so people have to take the word seriously, in order to see the transformation that will come to their lives, and to the environment. And that is where you will now have an organic relationship between that which is truthful and that which has been translated into a form that gives us happiness. As they say [in Proverbs 23:7, KJV], 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he' (A2/2012/Q7).

The idea of a functional religion is precisely what the local holistic ecotheology (LHE) proposed and expounded, as discussed in Chapter Seven. It advocates a Christian faith

that responds to the groaning of God's creation and to human needs (Romans 8, James 1:22, 27; 2:14-26).

For George Izunwa²² it makes no difference whether the earth will be destroyed or not. The paramount thing, for him, is for Christians to have the basic sense of responsibility to look after what God has given them to keep. He posits that it is illogical for people to use the coming of the Lord, and the saving of souls, as an excuse to ignore caring for creation. He argues that,

If that is our theology, then when we save them [people] we should kill them so that they go straight to heaven and not stay here. That can't be our theology. Jesus died and told us before He left to 'Occupy till He comes', so we have a divine mandate. To occupy does not mean just to take up space, it means to manage the environment, handle it well, build it up, keep it progressive until He returns. So, our job is to mobilize people to manage the earth well while we are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ. I think that should be a better approach to theology than that.

Izunwa's views buttress those of Presbyterians that indicates that it should be common sense for people, especially Christians, to take care of their environment. This is further strengthened by data from the surveys described in the following section which attempts to link faith with concern for the environment. So far, Presbyterians have, through the interview data presented in this chapter, expressed their eagerness to respond to the needs of their environment, despite the gaps and imperfections in their approach.

5.5.2 Linking Faith with Environmental Values from Quantitative Data

The revised and adapted New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) instrument was used to obtain data for this section, to complement the views expressed in the interviews. Some key outcomes from the two surveys conducted in 2009 and 2016 are summarised here in simple percentages, to illustrate the interplay of faith with value

²² Pastor George Izunwa, a Pentecostal minister and senior pastor of Gateway International Church in Port Harcourt. He was interviewed in 2009.

for the environment. The full (raw) results which are presented in Appendix One corroborate the interview results in terms of resonance to the fundamental Christian beliefs outlined in the interviews (Section 5.5.1). Table 2 (of Appendix One) presents a composite view of the results of the two surveys conducted in 2009 and 2016 covering all churches, including the PCN. Tables 3-5 in the same Appendix One contrast the results of the 2016 survey for Presbyterians and non-Presbyterians, respectively.

Despite the surveys having been conducted seven years apart, the respective results from 2009 and 2016 mirror each other, notwithstanding a couple of exceptions in NEP1 and 8. In NEP1, which deals with the issues of population growth, there was a very sharp contrast in the results obtained. In 2009, more people (62%) disagreed than agreed (16%) that we were approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support. In other words, about two thirds of the respondents believed that population growth was not a problem. But in 2016, the reverse was the case, as 74% of participants agreed that population growth had become a problem. This change of perspective seems to be an indication of a growing uneasiness, linked with reality of the impact of the oil and gas extractive industry, resource depletion, and other socio-political and economic issues discussed earlier in chapters one, three and four. It could also have been influenced by the reality of the growth of the local population, especially in Port Harcourt. It is ostensibly worsened by the challenges associated with the challenges of urbanisation discussed in Chapters 1.3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.6.

The second discrepancy, which in fact is related to the first, relates to the response to the idea in NEP8 that, 'Nature is strong enough to cope with the impact of modern industrialisation'. While in 2009, 45% agreed to the statement, and 39% disagreed, in 2016 there was a swing to the opposite direction as 87% disagreed, with only 11%

agreeing. Once again, there is an indication of a growing local awareness of the degradation being experienced in the Niger Delta.

The 2016 survey outlined in Table 3 specifically contrasts the survey result of Presbyterians against those of other churches. It shows that 98% of Presbyterians agree with the statement in NEP6 that, the earth is teeming with natural resources. This is supported by 70% who disagreed that 'the earth was like a space ship with very limited resources (NEP 11). This is unsurprising, if the knowledge of the region's enormous natural mineral wealth is taken into consideration.

In terms of human intervention in creation, 93% agreed that human beings have the right to modify the environment to meet their needs (NEP 2). Furthermore, 100% of the respondents believe that human beings were meant to rule over the rest of creation (NEP 12). This view is further consolidated by another unanimous (100%) agreement by PCN respondents to a similar statement in BT1 (Table 5) that, 'God told Christians to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Accordingly, the earth and creation are there for our use and enjoyment, based on the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2. Such a revelation raises apprehension that their concern for creation may be more utilitarian than altruistic. However, 94% of the respondents also agree that human intervention often leads to disastrous consequences (NEP3). Indeed, 93% agree that human beings are severely abusing the environment (NEP 5) and 90% believe that human beings are themselves vulnerable to such negative impact (NEP9).

Regarding the specific case of the Niger Delta environment, there was a huge leap in the results between 2009 and 2016. At the first survey (2009) the question was whether 'the so-called ecological crisis facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated' (NEP 10), to which 39% agreed and a close 42% disagreed. But when the

same statement was contextualised in 2016, substituting 'humankind' with 'Niger Delta', 89% disagreed. Thus, Christians in Rivers State believe that concern for the unsustainable state of the Niger Delta environment is not exaggerated. Unsurprisingly, 91% of Presbyterians in the 2016 survey warned that, 'If things continue on their present course, we will be soon facing an ecological catastrophe' (NEP 15). This was despite the high optimism of 98% agreement expressed in NEP14 that human beings will eventually learn how nature works to be able to control it.

Tables 0.4 and 0.5 (of Appendix 1) present different sets of data relating to biblical, theological and missional values. They seek to make the link between the respondents' faith and their concern for the environment. The categories are coded TM, which stands for Theology and Mission, and BT which stands for biblical teaching. On the whole, Presbyterians were decisive in their responses. For example, they gave a unanimous (100%) agreement to TM7 and TM8. The earlier asserted the idea that Christ's death had implication for the reconciliation of all creation to God, while the latter supports the notion that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. Both ideas find expression in the doctrine of creation expounded in Chapter Two, which affirms that, just as human beings, non-human creation has innate value given to it by its Creator (God) that is apart from human beings. Hence, non-human creation matters to God, just as human beings do. However, there was a contradiction, as 83% of the respondents indicated that Jesus died for the salvation of human beings only (TM6). Another contradiction was observed in the positive responses that buttressed (in TM1 to TM4) the importance of environmental issues to their faith, over half of them (59%) think that environmental issues are insidious (harmful) to the faith (TM5).

To underscore the lack of institutional agenda to drive a systematic involvement of the denomination with issues of the environment, none of the respondents (0%) agreed that there was a special day in the calendar dedicated for the environment, unlike other major causes supported by the PCN (TM11). Furthermore, less than half of the participants (45%) indicated knowledge of any denominational teaching resources to support their church's environmental care (TM12).

When asked what resources could inform a broader involvement of the PCN in resolving Niger Delta's environmental problems, 91% of the PCN participants pointed to the bible (TM14), and 67% to their local cultures (TM15). Indeed, 100% of Presbyterians, as well as members of other churches, in response to BT4 believe that 'the incarnation of God through His Son, Jesus Christ, shows us that he (God) regards His entire creation as important (Colossians 1:15-16)'. Consequently, they believe that God has given human beings, especially Christians, the responsibility to care for that which is dear to Him, BT5 and BT6.

Eschatologically, the responses to BT7 and BT8 indicate that Presbyterians believe that it is the responsibility of human beings to care for creation, irrespective of whether God is going to renew and preserve this present creation or make a brand new one. The responses show that there was an understanding among Nigerian Presbyterians (and non-Presbyterians alike) of a future state for the planet and for life in general. However, there was no unanimity in the nature of that future state. And, as described in Chapter 2.10, some think that the earth will continue interminably, but be constantly renewed by God. Others believe there will be a time when all life, as we know it, will come to an end, after believers have been 'raptured' or 'caught up' in the air to be with the Lord forever.

The combination of these key biblical and theological elements, coupled with the people's experiences of degradation, and of local socio-economic and political challenges, has informed the construction of the theology from below. This theology is otherwise known as the local holistic ecotheology proposed in Chapter Seven.

5.6 Comparing with Published Literature

It is important to note that on the idea of creation, there was a firm belief in God as the creator of the universe, and humanity as beneficiaries who depend on creation as God's gift (C10/2012/18). This is a notion that is basic in Christian doctrine as broadly outlined in Chapter Two that, God created all things and sustains them by His power (Eiselen, Lewis, and Downey, 1929:220; Vine, *et al*, 1996:51; Moltmann 1985:73; Milne, 1982:74).

Some significant conclusions have emerged from this evaluation of the response of the Presbyterian Church to Niger Delta's environmental problems. They are that:

1. The response of the PCN, where it exists, has been tangential to its mission, sporadic in its application, and uncoordinated in its execution. Most of the present engagements of the church with these issues as the data suggests have also been peripheral to the environment. There is therefore the need for a systemic appraisal of the church's approach to environmental issues.
2. There is clear lack of trained manpower to resource the needs of the church towards pursuing a clear environmental ministry. And while the grassroots of the church remains a potent force to fill this gap from the pool of lay professionals, such potentials have not been fully tapped. They are waiting to be harnessed and mobilised in order to fully actualise their God-given mandate.
3. There exists a communication gap between the General Assembly at the national level and its members at the grassroots. This gap has been exposed by the widespread ignorance within and outside the church of its actions towards the environment. This therefore calls for a deliberately crafted environmental policy for the whole church.
4. On the whole, the overarching problem seems to be the non-existence of a clear theological foundation to drive the church's engagement with environmental

issues. The data suggests that besides the personal reflection of members of the church over what these environmental issues means to them as Christians, they are yearning to be supported by their church with clear theological resources. Such a move that would mean that there is uniformity of views and action.

In summary, therefore, the emerging picture seems to be that although some congregations are responding according to local environmental challenges, such grassroots actions are mostly unplanned and not centrally coordinated. It is non-systemic in the overall PCN mission agenda. Although there may be other reasons for this state of things the most fundamental of these as highlighted above is the lack of a clear theological scaffold on which to build the church's intervention.

It is suggested here that the place to start in the absence of a balanced biblically sound ecotheology of sustainability is to revise and put the liturgy to good use. The alternative to such a lively and living liturgy is what Fubara-Manuel (2014:160-183) has outlined as mechanical, manipulative, and sometimes meaningless liturgical worship, which he says are among the signs of a dying church. He believes that fatigue sets in when a church's liturgy, worship, preaching and mission objectives are no longer inspiring and captivating the worshipping community. The solution, he believes, is 'a complete revisit of the foundations of the church – spiritual, theological, missional and ecclesiological' (Fubara-Manuel, 2014:183).

This holistic (not piecemeal) revisiting of foundations being proposed here validates the idea of God's continuous revelation today (by His Holy Spirit, illuminating the written word). Nevertheless, Hendrikus Berkhof (1979:58), Michael Weinrich (2000:2, 85-87), and BF Fubara-Manuel (2007:199-206) agree that, such fresh revelation or inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to be rooted in the Word of God – the bible.

5.7 Conclusion

The responses of the church and its congregations may have been imperfect, incoherent, and even tangential to the core Niger Delta environmental struggles. However, what crystalizes from these local experiences is of a church that is trying to make sense of issues affecting its immediate environment. Some of these actions, such as the decision to take a polluter (hotel) to court may have emerged from a survivalist perspective, but they are nevertheless innovative. The result may have been disappointing, but they are indicative of the potentials that exist within the church for future engagement with the core issues of oil-related degradation highlighted in chapters three and four.

The response of the national church is also sporadic and uncoordinated, but it reveals a willingness that cannot be discountenanced. What is needed is for the church to harness and use its abundant resources, especially its lay manpower and strategic fraternal networks. It needs to make full use of its unique Presbyterian structures and Reformed ethos to fully engage with the problems through its grassroots network of congregations across the Niger Delta. The General Assembly has to support and encourage local congregations who are better placed within their communities to pursue these engagements.

Small actions taken by local congregations and their members is making some difference in their immediate surroundings. The actions are admittedly lacking in coordination, yet they present unique solutions to peculiar local issues. Moreover, the efforts of the PCN in responding to some of Niger Delta's environmental problems, besides the periodic release of communiques, has remained largely undocumented. This thesis has provided them the platform to tell their stories. And, most importantly,

the research has pulled together from their responses key theological elements that led to the construction of the local holistic ecotheology proposed in this thesis (see Chapter 7). However, if the PCN will make a difference, it will have to deal with factors that have, hitherto, dogged its response, and are capable of limiting its participation henceforth. The consideration of these factors form the bulk of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: FACTORS LIMITING THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA (PCN)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with limitations that the PCN has faced, and will face, in intervening in Niger Delta's environmental crisis. Some of these limitations, drawn from a mix of primary and secondary data, are practical and structural in nature, while others are epistemic. Like the previous two chapters the data is drawn from forty six respondents, interviewed in 2009, 2012 and 2016 (the list is on Table 1.1). Cardinal among the limiting factors are the fear of reprisals, a failure to take advantage of existing networks that could support this cause, and issues surrounding mission priority. Published literature has also been employed to support the primary data and to supply what is not generally known.

6.2 Insecurity and the Fear of reprisals

The general state of fear amongst the people also meant that they were very cautious regarding what they said about the Niger Delta conflict. They did not wish to be caught in the crossfire that raged between the government and the Niger Delta militants. In September 2013 the Anglican Archbishop, Ignatius Kattey, of the Province of the Niger Delta (Church of Nigeria) was kidnapped and kept for about two weeks before he regained his freedom. It is uncertain why he was targeted but such experiences underscore the concern for safety in that volatile terrain (BBC, 2013).¹ It is in recognition of such dangers that Barrister Edward Iniobong cautions that the church

¹ Many local and international news outfits carried the news of Archbishop ICO Kattey's kidnap. See BBC (online) at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24098791>. Accessed 25/11/2015

(PCN) needs to be careful how outspoken it becomes, to avoid been seen as taking sides or opposing the government or the Niger Delta militants as the case may be,

The simple truth from my assessment is that in terms of campaign or drawing government attention to the plight, we have not done a lot. Do not forget that in Nigeria if you are too vocal you will be seen as an enemy of government. Our church will not want to be seen as an enemy of the state, in the process they have been mindful of what it will mean (G26/2012/42-43).

The Niger Delta crisis threw up a rash of non-State armed actors under the general guise of Niger Delta militants within what had become the wider nexus of an economy of violence (Oshita, 2007:128). Some of these actors were the recognisable voices that had acquired for themselves legitimacy as the de facto voice of the radicalised wing (if not the face) of the Niger delta struggle, such as the umbrella Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), with its enigmatic spokesperson, Gbomo Jomo. There was also the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force led by the more visible Alhaji Dokubo Asari, and the Niger Delta Vigilante led by Ateke Tom. It was with these groups that the government negotiated the amnesty that drastically reduced tension in the region when the militants agreed to lay down their arms. The government has gone ahead to reward the militant figure-heads with contracts running into several millions of dollars (billions in local currency, the Naira) to secure oil facilities (*Leadership, June 29, 2013*). By mid-June 2013 they were in the process of renewing the contract even when it is reported that oil theft has been on the increase, leading to Shell shutting down some of their wells.²

² 'The cost of the expired pipeline surveillance contract is put at N5.6 billion. It was awarded by the government to the ex-militants to check oil theft in the once volatile region, but oil theft has persisted, leading to Nigeria losing 600, 000 barrels daily. A breakdown of the last pipeline protection contract entered into with the ex-militant leaders showed that Mujaheed Dokubo-Asari got \$9 million yearly to pay his 4,000 former foot soldiers to protect the pipelines'. Ebikabowei "Boyloaf" Victor Ben and Ateke Tom got \$3.8 million a year apiece to have their men guard the pipelines, while Government "Tompolo" Ekpmupolo had a \$22.9 million a year contract to do the same job. Source: <http://leadership.ng/news/290613/pipeline-protection-tompolo-ateke-tom-ask-nnpc-new-deal>. Accessed 25/07/2013

The intractable security challenge only abated somewhat when the Federal Government of Nigeria offered amnesty to the militants. The state of fear and insecurity that followed its heels has been discussed in greater details in chapters three and four. The stories from Diobu and Bodo city churches have highlighted how insecurity affected ordinary Presbyterians (Chapter 4.2).

Monsignor Cyprian Onwuli³ (K46/2009) in 2009 expressed concerned about how the situation is affecting the response of churches and their leaders. He states that,

The security situation is such that you cannot predict when the crisis erupts or when these young ones will strike, unlike in Northern Nigeria where you will know when the attack is coming. Here there are things you will see and condemn tomorrow you will be taken away (K46/2009/66).

They (the church leaders) like other social commentators seems to have been caught in a web of intrigues spun by the primary actors and interest groups in the theatre of war, namely the government and oil companies on one hand and the Niger Delta militants on the other. The danger is real and does not discriminate about the status of the victim. Actually the higher the profile of the person involved, the more publicity it generates, as was the case when Archbishop Ignatius Kattey was kidnapped in September 2013.⁴

This existential threat of constant violence and the fear of molestation was acknowledged by both Barristers Apple (G24/2012/37) and Mr Igbara (J35/2012/58), in their respective interviews. Nevertheless, they urged the church not to be silent. Apple captures that mood when he related it to the obscurity of the communiques the church issues. He said:

³ Monsignor Cyprian Onwunli used to be the Chaplain of the Rivers State Government House chapel under Governor Peter Odili. He was also at the time of the interviews the Dean of the Port Harcourt Catholic Diocese, and the Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Rivers State

⁴ Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24013601>. Accessed 24/11/2013

after the Presbyterian conference you just see one small thing [communiqué]... as if we are hiding or afraid. As long as we are speaking the truth they will not bombard [attack] us, and even if we do not speak the truth if they want they will still bomb us, if God allows it' (G24/2012/37-38).

Prof Okoko (K41/2009) reminds church leaders of the bold steps taken by their counterparts in the Americas to combat the evils of their countries. He states as follows:

The US church played a key role in the face of oppression during the time of Martin L King Jr. They changed the landscape of the US as it is today, even with Obama as president in the midst of the current day urge. You cannot see the above scenario in Nigeria. Rather the people are following after miracles and material gains, etc. When people are pursuing material things, what time do they have to reflect and want to go on strike? Churches have ceased to be the houses of prayer but of business, and that is the tragedy of the churches (K41/2009/64).

Thus he discusses the part played by the church in the US in its agitation for social justice. He said those people were not afraid to pay the ultimate price for liberty as martyrs.

6.3 Dearth of trained manpower

Like many other churches, one of the challenges of the PCN would face in launching a program on the care of creation is that of the availability of manpower. Rev Dr BF Fubara-Manuel (K36/2009), at that time, the Minister-in-charge of Port Harcourt Parish,⁵ recognised this challenge, and called for more special training for ministers and collaborations among specialists:

Special training is needed for pastors to assist them deal with the issues. There should be relation between churches and the people. At this stage there is the need for collaboration between pastors handling the spiritual aspect, psychologists handling the psychological angle and sociologists handling the sociological dimension of the program in order to achieve a full rehabilitation and reintegration. Even civil rights organization should be involved to ensure that they are not victimized or stigmatized (K36/2009/60)

⁵ Fubara-Manuel was also the Chairman of the CCN Port Harcourt Project. But now (in 2016) he is the Rector of the Presbyterian Theological College in Itu, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Similarly, Prof Paul Ajah (K38/2009) of the Pentecostal Bible College expressed regret that they were not training specialised manpower, or at least, graduates with sufficient knowledge of the issues of the environment.

We have not had any kind of training for our pastors in this regard. In fact I feel ashamed as I talk to you. Our concern as pastors in the field appears to have been to fit people to go to heaven (K38/2009/62)

Nnimmo Bassey (K37/2009) echoed the need to broaden theological training to give room for more specialisms, and for teamwork, in order to equip the ministers for the demands of the times:

One way to do it is to create a department [in church offices] for the environment, but one should not do it alone there is the need for team work. We have to encourage theological institutions where there are pastors in training to include this in their curriculum. There are a lot of pastors in training. That is where to start, because the pulpit has power to hold and captivate many people, and can impact on people's lives (K37/2009/60)

Following from Mr Bassey's statement above, this research suggests that there is the need for the PCN to look inwards, retrain its manpower through refresher courses in contemporary mission challenges. This could happen during the periodic national ministers' conferences. Furthermore, it is hoped that the fruit of this research will equip the PCN, and indeed the body of Christ, with the theological framework to engage with these issues. Also, the curriculum of its two ministerial training institutions at Arochukwu and Itu should be broadened, as Mr Bassey suggests, dealing with these issues at the point of initial training for ministry.⁶ The training should incorporate elements of contemporary challenges in ministry, including those of the environment. Ministers need to become conversant, for example, with issues relating to ozone layer, global warming, and climate change, as these affect the lives of their parishioners.

⁶ Trinity (Union) Theological College, Umuahia, was previously the only recognised ordination training institution in the PCN for a long time before Essien Ukpabio Presbyterian Theological College and the Hugh Goldie Lay Theological Training Institution were given the nod in 1994 and 1996, respectively.

This study also opines that the laity, as the church's foot-soldiers, needs to be mobilised and properly educated in the same vein. Thankfully the Church has established the Directorate for Lay Development and Leadership Training, with a National Director since 2008, to help its members at the grassroots on various topics (PCN, 2013:331). Barrister Andrew Apple believes that the competency that the clergy lacks could be found in the laity who is teeming with expertise in various professions. The problem according to him is basically the church's inability to tap into this abundant pool of human resources, stating that

we have not used the plethora of talents we have within the church. We have judges, petroleum engineers, people who studied environmental studies and legal experts that should be used' (G24/2012/38).'

The answer therefore for any concerns about inadequate manpower is for the church to look inwards, within its fold and those of its ecumenical partners.

6.4 Ineffective Communication

With regards to the awareness of the church's action on the environment, the general consensus among Presbyterians, from the interview data, is that they do not know what their church is doing. Elder O Omoba of Rumuomasi parish declared pointedly that, 'I am not aware of any official role played by the church at any level – parish, presbytery, Synod or the GA [general assembly] in terms of maintaining the environment and all the issues that come from them' (C9/2012/15). It is interesting that Mr Omoba should come to this conclusion in disregard of the legal challenge they mounted against the hotelier, whose building worsened the local flooding problems by being sited on a drainage channel and whose waste petroleum effluence from its power generating plant caused a fire outbreak in the neighbourhood (See chapter 4.2.2). It could be out of modesty that he did not think this to be an achievement, by the church, to be proud of. Although the case could not continue for lack of witnesses,

it was an example of how little people take on giant corporations. It is also a sign of what is possible when the church takes the environment problem seriously.

The PCN has in recent years taken steps to address its public engagement by the launching of a website, and by the appointment of a fulltime Director of Information and Public Affairs, headed by Rev Kalu Ulu Eme. Notwithstanding their challenges, including the non-availability of funds, Rev Eme defended the church's record with regards to the Niger Delta environmental problems, arguing that the church has been in the vanguard of those campaigning for justice and equity.

It is the existence of Rev Eme's department that has ensured that the statements and communiques PCN's releases at the end of major meetings and conferences such as the periodic General Assembly Executive Committee (GAEC) and the parent General Assembly are published. So too have the various regional Synods followed suit. These statements and communiques have undoubtedly become vehicles through which the PCN plays its prophetic role to the nation.

One of such ongoing engagements at the time of the fieldwork in 2012, according to Rev Eme, was a publication by the Prelate and Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev Prof. EM Uka. This publication was going to be on sundry national issues including the on-going Boko Haram Islamist massacres in the north of Nigeria, the national constitutional conference, and the Niger Delta issues. According to Rev Eme, the Prelate questioned the status of Nigeria's secular status in that article, asking:

'Are we running a secular state or an Islamic State?' [And] based on all the happenings, he will end this by asking the whole Church, through Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), to observe a period of fasting to mourn for Christians who are being slaughtered every day [in the North by Boko Haram]. And secondly to ask the question 'what are we running into?' If he does this and the CAN leadership calls this fasting I believe it will yield a lot of results. So, we are doing our best. There is this constitution review going on, we have made suggestions and

proposals to them including true federalism, resource control, secular state, or even on elections (I33/2012/53-55)

The last part of the Prelate's planned publication directly addresses some of the key issues regarding the Niger Delta discussed in Chapter 3.3.3. Rev Eme also drew my attention to the numerous communiques and statements the church has released over the years (without providing copies), and wonders what more the church could do in the face of successive intransigence of both governments and the ordinary people in Nigeria. He opines that:

[The] church speaks about it [the state of the environment]. When you teach people how to keep their environment clean, to pack their refuse and take it to a designated place and nothing happens, what can you do? But then there is no opposition in Abia State, nobody tells the government in the state what they are doing is wrong except the church. And when they know there is nothing you can do except talk, they will continue in what they are doing. So, it goes beyond what the church is doing, it concerns crass irresponsibility of the gov't (I33/2012/54).

But while Barrister Andrew Apple does not dispute the fact that the church puts out communiques and statements after their GA or Synod meetings, however, he challenges the timid manner by which these publications are released. According to him,

After the Presbyterian [General Assembly] conference you just see one small thing [communique] in the corner of a newspaper... as if we are hiding or afraid. The Presbyterian Church is not visible (G24/2012/37-38).

Such poor visibility he believes affects the message of the church to the public. Members of the community however believe that the church should go beyond communiques and get involved in physical action that will make the right kind of impression. Prof E J Alagoa argues that

Here the church has not yet taken up a position where they are championing the voiceless, down-trodden and the poor. They make these statements once in a while but the real movement structures that will sustain have not yet been put in place and this environmental thing will be a very good platform on which to start a movement (K5/2012/64)

The church needs to hear these voices and, consequently, reassess how it is executing its plans and programs. Check that it has been able to plug all the loopholes pointed out by them.

6.5 Rigid Mechanical Structures of the Church

The PCN structure provides for a four-tier government flowing from the Parish to the Presbytery, to the Synod, and on to the General Assembly, yet its operation in reality is a different case altogether. That is perhaps why Elder Mrs Chika Uka says that while other churches are busy doing things in the community, the Presbyterian Church is busy with its 'mechanical structures' that hamper its ability to engage with its environment (G.23/2012/34). The challenge of operating the current church structure according to Rev B Ndikor is that it leads to slow decision-making. He cited a recent flooding incidence that meant they

could not worship for some Sundays. People were displaced, they needed relief materials – rapid response for that matter. But you know we usually take our normal time. It takes the process of the church legislation before you respond (G.27/2012/45).

From another perspective Barrister Andrew Apple blames the current structures of the church for not allowing enough time for church officers to settle into their posts to enable meaningful and progressive engagement with issues such as environmental matters:

...the structure of Presbyterian Church does not give that room for the intervention on some of these things. For instance we have the General Assembly [Moderator] who is elected every 6 years, after that the man's job is over. The same applies to the Principal Clerk who holds office for 6 years, and this overlaps with the Moderator's, for proper administration. But I want to see a situation where a general assembly head, that is our prelate, now it can be Rev Benedict Ndekor who is 40+ years, who has a focus, who can lead the church until he retires at 65. So that, if he says something, he can carry the policy of the church without any truncation, like we have in the Anglican and Catholic Churches (G.24/2012/38-39).

Consequently, Mr Apple is highlighting the need for a revision of the structures to extend the tenure of the principal officers of the church, and to make it open for

younger ministers. The post of GA Moderator is traditionally reserved for most senior ministers who due to length of service are usually nearing retirement. Consequently they retire on the post too soon to make any desired impact, according to Mr Apple. Irrespective of these sentiments, consideration must be given to the fact that it is not always the length of time that matters in leadership, but the quality of leadership. Furthermore, the Presbyterian tradition has historically had more short term Moderators, than its episcopal counterpart. Church policy can continue irrespective of who started them, provided it is properly codified. Also with the PCN's Reformed *semper reformanda* ethos, there is room for reforms.⁷

What Mrs Uka (G.23/2012/34) calls a mechanical orders or structures are actually useful tiers of governance which ensure, in theory, that there is ample opportunity for matters to be properly examined before decisions are taken. As such, the Presbyterian system is, arguably, the most democratic of church system where the church leader sits in the court of the church as a Moderator with a casting vote, if or when there is a tie. The Moderator's view is just one of many, and not the final authority as in the chief executive style of church governance that obtains in some other church systems such as the Episcopalian tradition where the bishop could act with de facto authority. However, for all its beauty, the Presbyterian system has a major weakness, which is that of the excessive bureaucracy that accompanies the tiers of governance. Urgent decisions are often delayed due to excessive consultation. It is no surprise therefore that Presbyterians are becoming increasingly agitated by what they see as the

⁷ 'Presbyterian, form of church government developed by Swiss and Rhineland Reformers during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation and used with variations by Reformed and Presbyterian churches throughout the world. John Calvin believed that the system of church government used by him and his associates in Geneva, Strassburg, Zürich, and other places was based upon the Bible and the experience of the church'. Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/presbyterian>. Accessed 25/04/2016.

unnecessary civil service orientated style of administration slowing down the pace of their church.

6.6 The challenge of Maximizing Existing Ecumenical and Fraternal Networks

Rev. Benedict Ndekor (G27/2012) reckons that no single church can make a significant difference on the environmental issue. Thus, advising that:

The churches could come together and say, this is a major environmental challenge, how do we go about it? Starting from the leadership, they meet as one family. Then each leader goes to their own church, brainstorm with them and come back with results. And then when it comes to funding, they come together and see it as a common problem. Face it as a challenge jointly (G27/2012/44-45).

From this comment, Ndekor encourages church leaders to first mobilise their own respective denominations, and thereafter pull their efforts together. That way, even the funding of any project will not be a burden to any one church. But Mr Endurance Comfort (E20/2012) thinks that churches and their leaders are not taking advantage of the abundant ecumenical opportunities due to petty bickering and rivalry:

Churches working together in Nigeria has been a problem. Everyone sees their church as the best route to heaven, and anything my Papa [church leader] says is the best. That has been our problem. That is why what is going on in the Niger Delta will continue, because the ministers, the heads of churches have refused to come together [because of competition/rivalry]. So networking among church leaders has been a problem. We need some kinds of Benson Idahosa today (E20/2012/32).⁸

Mrs Chika Uka (G23/2012), an elder of the Woji PCN, is disappointed that the PCN is not reaching out sufficiently to the community. In her experience, 'the only time we try is maybe during Palm Sunday when we dance around, apart from that we just do business with ourselves' (G23/2012/35). The result of such pre-occupation with self is basically that the PCN is not reaching out to others thus even their good intentions are hardly noticed by people outside the church. Mrs Uka is of the opinion that in the PCN 'we just do business with ourselves' (G23/2012/35).

⁸ Archbishop Benson Idahosa was an outspoken Pentecostal church leader and social critic who spoke boldly against government policies.

The PCN belongs to a host of local and international networks, such as the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN)⁹, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN),¹⁰ the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).¹¹ Thus, the above comments suggest that PCN members expect their church to work in partnership with its ecumenical partners to form the critical mass needed to influence things. Together they can challenge the government, the oil companies, and the general public to change their attitude towards the environment.

The optimism of a positive outcome on the Niger Delta issue based on joint efforts of the churches is not without historical antecedents. What the CCN failed to achieve in its attempt at church union, it succeeded with the establishing of a few ecumenical projects that are still active. One of these is what is commonly known as the Port Harcourt Project established since 1963,¹² whose core aims were:

⁹ It is founding member of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), which is a residue of a botched church union among mainline protestant denomination such as the Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Anglican churches. A few other churches have long joined them still exists and operates a number of joint projects (Johnston, 1988: 132-159).

¹⁰ CAN has five affiliate subgroups, including the CCN. The others are the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), the Association of African Instituted Churches (AICC), and the Evangelical Fellowship. But prior to CAN's formation there were antecedents of ecumenical cooperation. The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) being the earliest of these movements originated in 1929 from a botched church union involving some mainline protestant churches such as the Anglicans, the Methodists and the Presbyterians. The CCN is a member organisation of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Its mission is 'To facilitate and build the capacity of member churches that ensures a sustained Christian lifestyle, witness and transformation of the Nigerian society.' Source: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/nigeria/ccn-1>. Accessed 04/08/2014. Other alignments of churches have led to the formation of similar sub-groups within CAN mentioned above. These alignments as some of their names suggest seem to follow some broad theological affinities. For example, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) is the de facto body that caters for Pentecostal Christians in the country.

¹¹ Beyond the national ecumenical platforms the PCN also belongs to other ecumenical and fraternal networks such as the World Council of Church and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Besides these, the church also maintains strong contact with its fraternal partners such as the Church of Scotland that gave it birth, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to mention a few. These churches have all kinds of resources (especially intellectual resources) and belong to their own sets of networks that can be mined to the benefit of the needs of the church in this environmental concern.

¹² Hans Haselbarth quite a while ago summarised the project's aims and objectives and potential achievements as:

Promoting urban and industrial mission. The project aims at giving practical expression of God's love for men; it wants to draw Christians into a closer unity through service to the people of the city. Among the activities is running of a community centre and of a youth centre, a hostel for students, a workshop for disabled youth, a prison welfare scheme (including literacy classes), an industrial chaplaincy, and courses in urban and industrial mission for theological students and clergy (1976:122)

Hans Haselbarth (1976:122-123) wrote further about the project's resilience to be a result of the:

tenacity of local and outside supporters and the dedication of the staff'. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that, 'Their efforts are guided by practical needs rather than high-sounding ideals. There is a healthy stress on self-help programmes and witness through action which impresses by its sober realism (Haselbarth (1976:123).

Other areas of cooperation have included theological education. The cooperating CCN churches (comprising the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican churches) established the Trinity (Union) Theological College in Umuahia, Abia State where I was trained.¹³

Furthermore, the power of church cooperation lies in the knowledge that the words and actions of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) have carried much weight in the past. The government has tended to listen whenever CAN speaks.¹⁴ This seems to fuel the frustration of the Niger Delta people, who are mostly Christians (Omeje, 2006:55), that CAN has not lent its weight towards addressing the environmental issues in the region. They want to see CAN mount pressure on the government and the

¹³ Trinity Theological College, Umuahia in Abia State was established and run ecumenically under a tripartite arrangement involving the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches until recently. Unfortunately the Anglican Church has seized Trinity College for itself, putting a big dent on the spirit of ecumenical cooperation.

¹⁴ The formation of the Christian Association of Nigeria, which is the umbrella political union of virtually all Christian denominations in Nigeria, was supposed to serve the purpose of galvanising Christian public opinion at the highest level. The words and actions of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) since its 'chance' formation around the 27th of August 1976 been known to carry a lot of weight. Its birth happened spontaneously after a meeting called by the then Military Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo to consult them about the imminent introduction of the National Anthem and Pledge in Schools. The church leaders thereafter convened another meeting at the nearby Catholic Secretariat. 'At the meeting, the Church Leaders arrived at a monumental decision that they should form an organisation which would provide a forum where they could regularly meet together and take joint actions on vital matters, especially on issues which affect the Christian Faith and the welfare of the generality of Nigerians. That was the origin and the beginning of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).' Source: <http://cannigeria.org/about-us/>. Accessed 25/10/2013.

multinational oil companies that operate in the region to bring about concrete change in their present attitude towards the environment.

The argument advanced here is that the Presbyterian church of Nigeria cannot take on the environmental challenge by itself. It needs to carry along its ecumenical partners. One more way to achieve this, Rev. Benedict Ndekor advocates, is that churches should pool their resources together in order to confront the excuse of finance. He proposes that it will be more effective if action could involve the grassroots,

There could even be a combined effort within a locality. The churches could come together and say this is a major environmental challenge how do we go about it. [They] start from the leadership, they meet as one family...then each leader goes to their own church brainstorm with them and come back with results. And then when it comes to funding, they come together and see it as a common problem. Face it as challenge jointly. It will also be easier to put the resources together to get it done (G27/2012/44-47).

Such partnership described by Ndekor seems to be what is lacking at the moment, at least in the area of the environment. Each of the churches sampled in this research were either doing something about their immediate environment on its own or were not doing anything at all. And as can be seen from the data, there is little or no intra-church networking within the denomination (PCN), as the grassroots seem to be alienated from the national church on at least this matter of the environment. The networking of PCN churches can be improved to tackle the environmental problems.

6.7 Competing Needs and Priorities

A church's mission priorities affect how it allocates its resources. The Practice and Procedure (P&P) of the PCN sets out clearly what should be the order of budgetary allocation:

All Salaries, accommodation and pension dues;

Assessments of the General Assembly;

Synod and Presbytery Assessments (G-07.0503b).

Once these first lines of expenses have been dealt with the Parish then has the duty of providing and maintaining 'in proper order and repair' all physical facilities within its bounds (G-07.0503c).

The challenge the Presbyterian Church at both local and national levels has faced is that of balancing expectations with available resources. My observation during the field work was that virtually every parish had one construction project or another, on which a number of the respondents blamed their inability to engage with the added expense of environmental mission. At Woji Parish, Barrister Andrew Apple (G23/2012) summed up the situation when he said that,

Whatever money we have...Right now...we are...channelling most of it to complete the building. So, that is one of the setback we have. But once we have finished that, what we need to do is say we are going to do this water [flood] project (G23/2012/37).

In the case of Mary Slessor Memorial PCN (Port Harcourt Main Parish) both the church building and the manse were under construction – they had knocked down their manse and were waiting for funds to rebuild it. This was happening at the same time as their church building was being rebuilt. The experience was starker for Bori PCN where they worshipped in a makeshift log cabin built on rented land.

In addition to the above mentioned first line of expenditure (G-07.0503b), the traditional view that soul-winning is the primary task of the church has also influenced how next the church spends its money – on soul-winning evangelism as priority.¹⁵ For this reason Mrs C Uka says that, the limited 'resources of the church is such that when

¹⁵ Popular among them are the annual Holy Ghost Congress, Covenant Service and crusades (that is, open-air evangelistic campaigns) widely promoted by the late Rt Rev Dr James Udeogu Ukaegbu who pioneered revival meetings and the acceptance of charismatic and Pentecostal fervour in the PCN. It was under his leadership that the National Directorate of Mission was born.

we are winning souls and all that [members' welfare], there is nothing left to talk about caring for the environment' (C10/2012/Q12-Q13).

One member complained that by the time the General Assembly is through with the collection of their financial dues from the grassroots nothing more is left for them to face whatever issues that come their way. She laments that when it comes to the environmental challenge:

the obstacles sometimes has to do with finances, because we are indebted to a higher body that does not have this vision, the tendency is that they want to channel their resources to other things. So by the time you finish paying what you are supposed to pay to the higher courts you just merely have enough to exist (G23/2012/Q4).

Mr Endurance Comfort (E20/2012) also believes the church needs to make effective use of its voice on behalf of the people, and not just enjoy the contributions that come from the congregations:

So the church has to come out now and speak for its people because this same church will be asking for 30% [contribution made to sustain the higher courts of the church from local churches] to be remitted to the parish. Their only concern is about their 30% and establishing more churches. At least they should feel the pain of their people because they are their people over there. They should know what they are passing through and add their voice to theirs. At least this church they have people in gov't, and if the Mod of GA rises to say something, at least their representatives in gov't will facilitate this information and make sure that things are being done. So the church has to rise to its responsibility. They should use their voice, because their voice can go far (E20/2012/32).

Others see poverty as an inhibiting factor why churches are finding it difficult to take action on the environment. Churches are caught-up with expenses involving the support of their indigent members. But Mr Festus Karl of Bori PCN, however, argues that

There is no amount of poverty that should make the church not to do something. An individual can contribute One thousand Naira (N1000.00) towards the cost of a shovel (E18/2012/29).

The problem therefore is that the General Assembly of the PCN has failed to harness or even match such level of individual enthusiasm at the grassroots. Consequently there is a corresponding lack of enthusiasm for environmental issues across the denomination despite concerns being raised. That gives meaning to the views of Dr Nkire (C10/2012) of Rumuomasi church that 'The church (PCN) has not caught on yet' with the environmental message (C10/2012/18).

The question is what is the nature of engagement expected of churches? Barrister S K Igbara (J35/2012), a leader of MOSOP, dismisses any notion that Niger Delta communities want financial help from Churches. He says what they want is for the church to utilise its extensive local and international networks to give the Ogoni people a voice. He argues:

The cry of the Ogoni people is not about money. What we want is who speaks for us and people will hear. And I think the church has a 'big mouth' [capacity] to do that speak. Every church has that spiritual independent mouth. When once they believe and trust in God they can speak, because they are talking about truth and justice. Nothing stops any church member from speaking it. If the person should be killed by the Nigerian gov't he becomes a martyr. If nobody recognises him like that here, heaven will recognise him because he died because of truth. Christ died because of truth (J35/2012/58)

Mr Igbara believes much can be achieved without finance, if only the church can use its influence and external reach to tell the truth about the people's plight to the government and people of Nigeria, and to the rest of the world, about the dire environmental situation. How Igbara's suggestion could be given practical expression has been covered previously in Section 6.6 of this chapter. It notes that the PCN like many other established church belong to local and international ecumenical bodies such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) that could amplify its advocacy. But it was also noted that this has not been fully utilized, not only by the PCN, but also the other churches in Nigeria. Consequently,

Chapters Seven (particularly, 7.8) and Eight have been dedicated to answer the question, what can the church do?

Pastor Mrs Uloma Sunny-Cookey (K49/2009)¹⁶ adds her voice against the excuse of tight church finances as a militating factor against robust Christian response, with the argument that it all depends on the church's priorities. She claims that many churches are wealthy, and can contribute resources for basic environmental intervention, but that they have to curb their wasteful spending to be able to do so. Nnimmo Bassey (K37/2009) therefore insists that:

Churches are not buildings but I tell you the truth we invest a lot of money in buildings. We are branding and rebranding, the world is leading the church in these things, but we are not following after the environmental campaigns. I know that some churches and organization are doing something but more can be done, massively and urgently too (K37/2009/60)

Even when respondents acknowledge that the PCN is saddled with many responsibilities, they argue that good planning and the resetting of priorities is what the body of Christ needs in order to respond appropriately to the environmental problem. Mr India Ume (A2/2012), a member of the Mary Slessor Memorial PCN, believes that the church still needs to allocate resources for the cause of the environment despite competing needs

Yes, we have to spend money. Development just doesn't happen, it comes as a result of needs that arise in the life of people, and financing it is the major aspect of development (A2/2012/5).

Nevertheless, Ume suggests that the Church must invest more into revenue-yielding ventures to help tackle the problem associated with the paucity of funds. That seems to be the underlying approach in the places where local churches have responded to

¹⁶ Uloma is the wife of the General Overseer of Life Gate Power Ministries on Stadium Road, Port Harcourt.

the needs of their environment. Also, Rev B Ndikor of Woji PCN highlights the pressure from competing needs against environmental projects when he said:

when you present such issues here within the local setting they will quickly remind you of even your own members who need such assistance... so when you now stand as a minister and begin making an open appeal the quick response will be 'charity begins at home.' What have we done for ourselves before we talk of doing for the people outside? (G27/2012/45-46)

It is important to not gloss over a criticism by Prof Okoko (K41/2009) that Nigerian Christianity is largely concerned about the salvation of souls as against concern for other issues that affect the daily lives of the people (K41/2009/64). Such criticisms are not novel. It is in fact the basis of Nkem Osuigwe's 2010 PhD thesis which tested the validity of a similar claim by Paul Gifford (1991) that African fundamentalist evangelical Christianity lacks social responsibility. He goes on to say that 'only a few...are involved in any form of development, and in these cases I would like to maintain that their involvement is really a contradiction of their teaching, for their message itself militates against such commitment' (Gifford, 1991:19).

However, based on his research Osuigwe (2010) rejects the claim and concludes that what seems an over-emphasis on the salvation of the human soul over social concern by most African Churches is because they believe that achieving the former leads to the latter. Osuigwe (2010b:6) argues that,

It is an attitude with an inside-out orientation that places primary emphasis on changing the individual before changing the society.

That is perhaps why Archbishop Ignatius Kattey of the Anglican Church, in response to such claims, unapologetically emphasised that while the church is encouraged to respond to social concerns it should remember that its primary duty is to win souls (K8/2009/66).

Consequently, for Nnimmo Bassey, the problem is not whether the church has the means to engage with the needs of the environment or not, but rather the priority. He believes that:

The church is rich. It's a matter of priority. If the churches are frank enough to bring out their budget you will be surprised to see that it is a matter of priority. If only they can reorder their priority. Is evangelism your priority? How much do they spend on evangelism? It is not that big crusades are not good, but big crusades will not convert the world (K37/2009/60).

The challenge is therefore for the PCN to set its priorities right. The aspects of missionary methods the PCN inherited from their Scottish progenitors to reach the people of Nigeria included education, evangelism and medical work. In other words, there is a strong precedence of social concern for the PCN to follow. This was true both in Nigeria and in other places where Scottish missionaries worked, which explains why education was a cornerstone of Scottish mission. As Andrew Walls (2002:262) noted, for the Scottish mission strategy, 'Education was mission'. This view is supported by Geoffrey Johnston who noted the same Scottish passion for education and other social concerns in the case of their Nigeria mission. He observes that although

[T]he missionaries were never numerous. They preached, they taught school, they visited among the women, they engaged in periodic campaigns for social reform; in the 1850s and again in the 1890s they practised medicine, and they did a certain amount of ministerial training (Johnstone, 1988:3).

The fruit of those interventions was widely felt within the benefitting communities to the extent that it addressed entrenched social ills such as the killing of twins, who were at the time abhorrent to local people. It provided healthcare, and trained manpower for both church and state. In the light of the foregoing it is left to be seen how these legacies of transformational social changes can be mined by the PCN to articulate a contemporary mission strategy that incorporates care for the environment. A useful

place to start is for the PCN to explore what the Church of Scotland is currently doing in this regard.¹⁷

6.8 Changing societal Values

The PCN Director of Information and Public Affairs, Rev KU Eme (I33/2012), argues that one of the reasons why there is decadence in society, including the state of the environment, is that values have changed for the worse. Regretfully he admits that the body of Christ, including the Presbyterian Church, is affected as well. He laments that godly values are no longer the prevailing virtue of the present Nigerian society as discussed previously in chapter 4.4.7.

To understand these internal issues one needs to dig a bit into the history of church growth in Nigeria, which became pronounced after the civil war years (1967-1970), largely due to Pentecostal and Charismatic influences of the 1970s (Kalu, 2006:xv, Burgess, 2008:1-2) making Nigeria one of the centres of global Christianity (Burgess, 2008:3). This came with influences from different parts of the world especially Europe and America, and church traditions. But the most pronounced negative influence comes from the 'prosperity gospel', as well known as the 'health and wealth gospel', and 'name it and claim it' theology (Fubara-Manuel, 2007:230-231).

Many commentators, including Paul Gifford have traced this brand of Christianity to Pentecostal and charismatic churches of the United States of American (Gifford, 1998).

Gifford acknowledges that 'the Pentecostal explosion has not only taken members

¹⁷ The Church of Scotland is presently involved in working towards giving due attention to the environment a part of its church mission. They are particularly looking to see how they can help mitigate the impact of Climate Change in Scotland and abroad. See, one of their resource materials posted online at http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/7373/New_Climate_Change_Leaflet.pdf . Accessed 21/10/2013.

from mainline churches, but Pentecostalsed these churches themselves' (Gifford, 1998:306). Some of the distinctiveness of this brand of Christianity which in his view are 'fundamentalist'¹⁸ in expression are their over-emphasis among other things of personal salvation and other-worldliness. They preach millenarian dispensationalist (end-time) gospel with its emphasis on the soon-coming of Jesus Christ, and as such deflect attention from social ills, which makes them detached from present realities (Gifford, 1990:4).

The problems, according to commentators, is that the emphasis of the health and wealth gospel has the potential of deflecting attention from socio-economic and political problems confronting the people due to its over-emphasis on personal gain. Therefore, detrimental actions of the government go unchallenged, or are excused as the will of God, in fear of jeopardising government patronage. Worst still, the inaction of the church is as a result of a misguided theology of extreme separation of church and state. It is within such context that Paul Gifford has criticised the public role of African Christianity as being less concerned about social, political and developmental issues.

Furthermore it discourages moves towards engaging with the reality of a degraded environment, the idea being that God is going to destroy the earth anyway. Therefore there is no point doing anything to save it. In contrast, other commentators on African Christianity such as Richard Burgess (2008) believe that the situation is more nuanced than that. For example pastors and their churches in Nigeria have been known to

¹⁸ Paul Gifford, according to Osuigwe, views this brand of 'fundamentalist' African Christianity borrowed from eighteenth century North American Christianity as that which 'encourages a passive acceptance of disasters, misfortunes and a lack of social responsibility, leading to the absence of any commitment to development, anti-socialism; and Christian Zionism that accords the nation of Israel 'blind' support, which he claims is as a result of American influence' (Osuigwe, 2010:55).

Speak out against the malaise of the society. Burgess' take on the impact of Pentecostalism is on a positive note, highlighting its pragmatism. According to him:

African Pentecostalism appeals to popular religious sensibilities precisely because it resonates with the pragmatic and power-oriented nature of African indigenous spirituality, while at the same time allowing individuals to break free from the religious and social ties of the past and construct new identities for themselves. By doing so, it helps to alleviate the dilemma of dual allegiance to church and traditional cult so prevalent in mainstream African Christianity. (Burgess, 2008b:30-31).

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the limitations that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) has faced, and potential ones that it will likely face if it wants to intervene in the Niger Delta environmental crisis. They range from issues such as shortage of manpower, internal resource allocation, and intangible issues such as changing values. The church has many active departments that can offer training to members of the clergy and laity. Consequently, the solution to the paucity of manpower is the training of needed personnel. The church's theological institutions are also called to reform their training curriculum to include environmental mission. But the church's inability to utilise its existing fraternal and ecumenical networks is depriving the church of valuable support it would otherwise have availed itself of. Other problems, especially issues related to security, which only the instruments of state can provide are beyond the ability of the church to handle. But there are opportunities for the church to intervene. They can support moves to de-escalate tension in the region by brokering peace between warring factions, that is, between the government and the militants.

However, of all the challenges facing the PCN none in my view compares to the lack of a clearly articulated ecotheological foundation. This is because such a foundation is *sine qua non* to a robust engagement. Also, it provides the church the needed intellectual and missional scaffold upon which to execute its involvement, reform its

praxis, and to empower the community of faith. Therefore, drawing from the foundations laid in previous chapters, especially from resources mined from the local context and Christian theology, Chapter Seven will attempt to articulate an ecotheology appropriate for the PCN and for the Niger Delta.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TOWARDS A LOCAL HOLISTIC ECOTHEOLOGY FOR THE NIGER DELTA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter pulls together key elements of the local holistic ecotheology proposed in this thesis to aid the transformation of the Niger Delta environment. These elements which are rooted in the local context, encompass the local culture, the people's lived experiences (socially, economically, and politically), biblical theology, and logical reasoning of the people, contribute to the realisation of this theology. Thus, an ecotheology for the Niger Delta must be holistic, in the sense that it must include the economic dimension (mineral wealth), the socio-cultural dimension (traditional beliefs), the political dimension (governance) and the ecclesiastical dimension (the church). The holistic sense of such an ecotheology is more urgent for the Niger Delta than in Western ecotheologies for the reasons to be elaborated upon shortly. But the sense of holism and rootedness is further strengthened by its being contextual and local.

Previous chapters have served to illustrate the notion that the Niger Delta environmental crisis is multifaceted. Besides purely bio-physical factors such as oil spills, the crisis is also fed by issues that have economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions. Economic issues that have affected and exacerbated the already messy environment are intricately related to the oil economy. The highly competing economic space is shared by a nexus of powerful interests that has created a parallel oil economy, official and non-official. The official oil economy is controlled by a rentier Nigerian State and its joint venture production partners, namely the oil companies - Shell, Chevron, Agip, Mobil, and so on (Omeje, 2007). In the unofficial underground oil

economy are oil thieves and their sponsors, corrupt government officials, soldiers, militant leaders, and a web of criminal oil merchants. Kathryn Nwajiaku (2012) writes that:

The web of interest involved in the growth industry, that is the theft of oil, is labyrinthine and not restricted to the activities of the so-called rebels, who feature as useful, yet bit-part players within a wider semi-officially sanctioned trade (Nwajiaku, 2012:296).

Irregular and often mismanaged oil revenue, coupled with fluctuating oil prices, has been problematic for Nigeria's oil-based economy. Poor management means that successive governments have not been able to diversify the economy to generate other streams of income to ensure economic independence (Obi & Rustad, 2011:102). Also the inequitable distribution of the oil wealth and lack of accountability has compounded the high stakes in the Nigerian economy, encouraging mismanagement and corruption (Oviasuyi & Uwadiae, 2010:121). Meanwhile poverty in the midst of plenty is the lot of the local people whose ecosystem-dependent means of livelihood has been severely affected by oil spills and other oil industry activities (Uzoma & Mgbemena, 2015:1).

The socio-cultural and political landscape in the Niger Delta has been tense, following the above pollution and economic problems. These have led to protests and subsequently to an armed insurgency with a rash of militant groups springing up in the Niger Delta, ostensibly to advocate for the people of the region. The fragility of the Nigerian state has thrown up a cocktail of other issues such as insecurity, kidnapping for ransom, oil bunkering (theft), and so on. All of these issues discussed in Chapters three and four feed into the general state of unsustainability, as they create degradation by sabotage and related illegal refining activities (Boas, 2011:119-122; Ikelegbe, 2011:125).

The major stakeholders have responded in various ways to this situation. The action taken by the government include the setting up of a number of agencies to regulate activities in the oil sector, a commission to coordinate the development of the region, and steps such as amnesty to the militants to address the problem of insecurity. Oil companies have as well taken steps to reduce the flaring of gas, provision of better corporate social responsibility (CSR), and granting of scholarship and other amenities to the communities. The communities have reciprocated by reducing the spate of protests, even when the issues have not fully been addressed. Moreover the militant groups embraced the amnesty program, even though the program has not been wholly successful. Hence the continued sabotage of pipelines by militant groups, especially previously unknown groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), due to the same inconclusive handling of issues that led to the insurgency (Obi & Rustad, 2011:205).

These unfinished issues suggest that there is need for alternative remedies. In chapter five it has been suggested that although the actions taken by the church have not been wholly related to pollution issues, yet there are potentials for future action if properly harnessed. That is why this chapter is suggesting that the church could be an effective advocate and educator for realising the potential solution to the Niger Delta environmental problems. But such involvement needs to be supported by the right kind of theology to actualise the potential solution. And that theology needs to be locally rooted in the culture of the people, and holistic to cover all the facets highlighted: economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental and spiritual. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully develop an ecotheology covering all these facets. However, it suggests and highlights what such an ecotheology should consist of, hence the phrase 'Towards a Local Holistic Ecotheology' in the chapter title. The

holistic dimensions of such an ecotheology is discussed here reflecting local cultural elements.

Chapters one and two introduced the principle of a holistic theology from below imbedded not only in Christian scripture but also in the local Igbo culture. These cultural principles are hinged on two key traditional philosophies: *'Ebe Onye Bi Ka O N'awachi'* and *'Egbe bere, Ugo bere'*. The former was suggested by the interviewees as the basis of what can inform the church's intervention. These I believe if properly adopted and adapted within a biblical framework would present the needed framework for making a lasting difference in the Niger Delta.

But for such to be effective the church must see the world through Africans eyes, and not through borrowed Western lenses. Thus, despite that the PCN's received Christian theology is from that part of the world, we are beginning the exploration of a local holistic ecotheology from the local context. Consequently, the need to understand how the African conceptualises his world.

7.2 How Does the African Conceptualise His World?

The emphasis of spirits in nature, and the prominence of rituals, totems and symbols in African traditional religions (ATR) have led to its description as primal and animist (Kalu, 2008:37). The seamless connection that exists in that worldview between the physical natural forces and the metaphysical, between the mundane and the spiritual, is such that the people believe one is as real as the other, and that there is an intimate exchange between the two worlds (Kalu, 2008:44). The two realms are thought to form one broad community to which the individual (past, present and future) belongs, lives and expresses his/her being (Evans, 1983:5). Thus John Mbiti notes that the African is never independent of his community but is defined by it, and that his

community is inclusive of dead relatives who have joined the rank of their ancestors (Mbiti, 1990:106).

Adherents of ATR, who in most cases are peasant farmers, herders, and fishermen, are involved in primary production and are attached to the earth and its resources. Their livelihood and view of reality revolve around their context. Thus, the earth, its products, and the larger cosmos feature prominently in their myths, culture and life stories (Kalu, 2008:42).¹ There are many ritualistic activities associated with agriculture, from the planting season to the harvest. It is in these ways that one begins to understand that the strong attachment existing between the people and their environment is not just superficial, but far-reaching, and deeply imbedded within the social, economic, political, and spiritual fabrics of their society.

A closer look at rituals will reveal their place and significance in the light of our environmental discourse. Mbiti (1975:135) points out that ‘ultimately all the rituals that people perform are for the welfare of the individual and the society. They are in effect health rituals since they are aimed at preserving and prolonging life.’ The idea of preservation and prolongation expressed here is very much at the heart of sustainability, and evidently not limited to human wellbeing. Earlier in the same passage, Mbiti had defined a rite or ritual as:

a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. It is a means of communicating something of religious significance, through word, symbol and action’ ...a ritual embodies a

¹ The African’s life is full of celebration from birth to death. With these celebrations rituals come into play. There is a celebration cum ritual when a child is born, when he or she grows into adolescence and experiences puberty, when the young person is admitted into responsible adulthood, when this adult is ready for marriage, and lastly, and perhaps most importantly, when the person dies and is ready to join his or her ancestors.

belief or beliefs. The ritual word is powerful since it is spoken in seriousness and solemnity, and it is repeated every time that ritual is done.² (Mbiti 1975:126).

Rituals connect the spiritual and temporal; they precede and accompany key events and rites of passage in the life of the community – from birth to youth, and from adulthood to death (Falola, 2003:214). Agriculture cycles are marked by similar rites and rituals, encompassing farming (planting till harvesting), fishing, hunting, and so on (Nwala, 1985:57-58, 72). Furthermore, and of interest to this research, is the idea that these rituals played a significant role in dealing with environment disasters (Ademuluyi & Asiyanbola, 2012:335).

Despite tribal differences there is much cultural commonality among Africans in the way they view the world and interact with their physical milieu (Falola, 2003:55). This is the case among the tribes populating the Niger Delta area, and indeed the entire former Eastern region of Nigeria. For example, both the Igbo and the Ogoni see a strong bond between people and their environment which are inhabited by guardian spirits and their ancestors. The bond exists between the physical and the spiritual worlds, between natural resources and the deities that ‘inhabit’ them. Kenule Saro-Wiwa wrote, that:

To the Ogoni, the land on which they lived and the rivers which surrounded them were very important. They not only provided sustenance in abundance, they were also a spiritual inheritance. The land is a god and is worshipped as such. The fruit of the land, particularly yams, are honoured in festivals and, indeed, the Annual Festival of the Ogoni is held at the yam harvest. The planting season is not a mere period of agricultural activity: it is a spiritual, religious and social occasion (Saro-Wiwa, 1992:12).

The implication of this worldview is that there is a peculiar way the people relate and respond to their environment. They see the intrinsic cosmic value of items in their

² In my native Obinto village in Abia State of Nigeria one of the ritual words is “Egbe bere, Ugo bere”, which literally means “let the eagle perch and let the dove perch”. The statement is an appeal for mutual coexistence in creation. This call can be extended to all of species.

environment in contrast to their material value as commonly associated with modernism which tends to commodify resources of nature instead of first appreciating them for their intrinsic attribute as much as their material value. From the backdrop of this custom the Ogoni people find inspiration for their current environmental struggle. This culture, according to Wiwa, has in these modern times been translated into 'a deep awareness of the importance of the environment and the necessity to protect and preserve it' (Saro-Wiwa, 1992:14). This means in practical terms that,

...forests are not merely a collection of trees and the abode of animals but also, and more intrinsically, a sacred possession. Trees in the forest cannot therefore be cut indiscriminately without regard for their sacrosanctity and their influence on the well-being of the entire community, of the land...The Ogoni rivers do not only provide water for life – for bathing and drinking, etc; they do not only provide fish for food, they are also sacred and are bound up sacredly with the life of the community, of the entire Ogoni nation (Saro-Wiwa 1992:13).

For the Igbo, the role of the divine in their daily life is ever so obvious. A visitor who accompanied Bishop Ajayi Crowther on one of his early 19th century Niger expeditions remarked that:

Ibos are in their way a religious people, the word "Tshuku", God, is continually heard. Tshuku is supposed to do everything. When a few Bananas fell out of the hands of one into the water, he comforted himself by saying, "God has done it" (Page n.d.:49).³

It is interesting that in addition to the retention of the place and person of a supreme being, God, who has direct relation and control of his creation, the people also recognized lesser deities such as *Ani* (the Earth god – one of the divinities that controls the soil and food production). This deity, like many others, serves as intermediary between man and God. This structure developed perhaps because for the Igbo people, Chukwu is so high that there is no representation of Him, or shrine, or grove (Ohadike,

³ Tshuku is perhaps an anglicized variant of God's name, Chukwu, in Igbo. It is derived from the hyphenated (double-barrelled) Chi (God) and ukwu (big, large, almighty). Thus, Chukwu (Chi-Ukwu) became the name for the Almighty God.

1996: xxxiii). He is so revered that the people would prefer approaching Him through the intermediation of lesser deities.

Page's observation of and fascination with this religious worldview (which predates Christianity) is that the Igbo people's notion of some of the attributes of the Supreme Being (*Chukwu*, as they call Him) are in many respects in tandem with the Judeo-Christian understanding of God. He also noted the striking manner by which these people expressed this, even in their parables, which are very descriptive of the perfections of God who they undoubtedly recognized as the Creator. For example they will say "God made everything. He made both white and black." Page concludes that 'the conceptions they have of God's omniscience and omnipresence cannot be disputed' (Page n.d.:49-50). This concept of God is also a well-established fact among other tribal religions of Africa (Idowu, 1973:137f, Johnston, 1985:295, and Parrinder, 1962:12).

The association of the resources of the earth with divine presence made it natural for the people to apply caution and reverence in their use of those resources. In East Africa the Shona of Zimbabwe had a similar custom of preserving earth's resources with the fear of ancestral sanction if they misused them. Whole forest and water resources were thus preserved from being unduly poached and endangered (Daneel, 1998:195). Traditionally some of those groves were called evil forest. Consequently, entry by un-initiates was viewed seriously as an act of disrespect and trespass, carrying unpleasant sanctions. The same kind of strict regime applied amongst the people of Malshegu community in Ghana where only the priests and custodians of those sacred places were allowed access (Daneel 1998:208).

The enforcement and administration of sanctions differed across Africa depending on how ethnic groups and communities were politically organised. For the Igbo people who are essentially republican, they lacked a central monarchical system that governed the whole tribe (Aina, 2013:170). Thus, there is a saying among Igbo people that, '*Igbo enweghi eze*', (meaning, the Igbo have no king). This is sometimes erroneously construed by some to mean statelessness, while actually the Igbo nation was organized in small autonomous city-states (Falola & Heaton, 2008:21-29). On the other hand, other competing large tribes such as the Yoruba (Ile-Ife), Bini (Benin) and Hausa-Fulani were organized in large kingdoms covering vast territory. But the Igbo republicanism actually engenders a competitive spirit among communities, which promotes development, including the care for their environment.

The Igbo employed the existential philosophies of *Ebe Onye bi ka O n'awachi* (one defends where one lives) and *Onye ahala nwanne ya* (none should abandon their kin) as mechanism to encourage loyalty to the community and collective responsibility. And although these ideas ordinarily emphasize individuality and individual action, however, the strategy is to encourage personal responsibility to achieve collective wellbeing. The earlier adage promoted the idea that individuals were to fend off attacks (hurt, damage, or evil) that emanate from their end of the community. The latter was a call to communal solidarity. Relating this to the environment means ensuring that each person mends their side of the village's protective hedge.

The notion of *Onye ahala nwanne ya* ensured that everyone was cared for. It requires individuals to cover one another's back as they covered their respective flank. The nature of this philosophy, steeped in communitarianism, aggregates individual efforts into mass action, leading to cumulative result. Indeed, a similar adage brings the

ecological implication further home, known as *Egbe bere, Ugo bere*. The full proverb is *Egbe bere Ugo bere; nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwapu ya*, which means 'let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, whichever one prevents the other from perching, let his wings fall off'. The proverb enjoins peaceful coexistence, justice, and equity among all species, and not just the survival of the fittest. It also carries a notion of punishment for the selfish and inconsiderate offender.

It is important to note, therefore, that the notion of individuality earlier mentioned should be understood in the context that the individual is nothing without his community, and conversely the individual is the heart of the community. 'The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am"' (Mbiti, 1969:108-109). They saw themselves not as isolated individuals, but as members of a corporate unit, with responsibility for themselves and others. Thus, the wife is not married to her husband alone, but also to his kinsmen, and their children do not belong to them alone, but to the entire community and are cared for by all. Thus, the community makes the individual, and he owes his existence to them.⁴

Even among African diasporic communities this sense of communal solidarity held sway. James Evans Jr highlights this consciousness among African-Americans in the United States, arguing that,

The cultural matrix of the African tended to affirm the infinite worth of the African as a human being in relation to other human beings and under the auspices of a benevolent creator God. The community (the no longer living, the living, and yet to be born) was affirmed as the basic social unit and as the social framework in which the individual was

⁴ In this setting selfish people are abandoned to bear their own burden when the time comes, thus the system is naturally self-regulating and achieves its purpose (Maranz, 2001:4). On the contrary hardworking and communally-active individuals like Okonkwo (in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*) find it easier to get help from members of the community because of built up social capital that was readily available. In his case he was able to obtain a loan of yam seedlings from Nwakibie for planting following a severe famine that adversely affected the entire community (Achebe 1958:14).

defined. All creation, including nature, was seen as infused with the spiritual essence of God (Evans, 1983:5)

With a moral consciousness steeped in this worldview that intertwines religion and morality, any misdemeanour potentially unsettled the delicate physical and metaphysical balance of society (Okafor, 1992:32; Areji & Anyaehie, 2015:104). Richard Burgess highlighted this aptly when he said that, among Igbo people: 'Sin pollutes the individual or community (and hence, the land) and must be cleansed to ward off the wrath of the gods. A person who commits sin is referred to as *onye aruru ala* (one who pollutes the land)' (Burgess, 2008:48). This is based within the wider context of the nature of *Omenala Ndi-Igbo*, which is the corpus of all Igbo culture, embracing their customs, philosophy, worldview, and traditions (Nwala, 2010:76).

Omenala is a compound of three words, *Ome* (that which is done or obtains), *na* (in), *ala* (ground, land, earth, or society). Therefore, *omenala* is that which has become customary or traditional in a locale. It comprises 'various aspects of behaviour and social activities that are approved while at the same time indicating those aspects that are prohibited' (Okorochoa, 1987:101). These, including people's rights and privileges, obligations and duties, which were directed by the collective conscience of society, serve as moral compass, and not necessarily by legislation (Mbiti, 1975:176-177).

The notion of polluting the land is also connected to the idea that, as God animated nature and gave creation its vitality and being, any sin impacts the community (invariably impacts the land), and is ultimately a sin against God. Therefore, the contravention of taboos and prohibitions were met with punishment and sanctions by the enforcing elemental spirits of the land, of which the ancestors are a part (Mbiti, 1969:173). Thus, drought, famine, ill-health, floods, and so on, are thought to be signs of divine anger and retribution against human sins. In most cases, acts of restitution to

the offended human party and/or restorative sacrifices through prescribed intermediaries can lead to the appeasement of the deity and forgiveness for offender (Aina, 2013:171).

The common thread in the traditional worldview addressed in this section is the recognition of, and call for, solidarity among human and non-human creation. It is a call for justice, equity, and mutual coexistence. It is a vision of a world where the weak and strong, the poor and the rich, where various classes and species realise that their wellbeing is tied to that of the whole. It is a world constructed on a natural order that respects the uniqueness of the individual, and yet recognises the beauty they bring into the whole. Chapters three and four indicate that the Nigerian state is fraught with issues that have challenged the vision of a just society. The influence of traditional institutions have waned in the face of inept successor structures of an equally inept modern nation-state. These concerns are addressed in the ensuing section.

7.3 Things are Falling Apart: Social Upheaval, Identity Loss, and Ecological Damage

The extent to which the above traditional ways are still holding sway is open to debate, but some observers and commentators are in agreement that things have changed in an insidious way. To Toyin Falola (2003:57) three factors are primarily responsible for the observed breakdown in African cultural heritage and its waning influence – the slave trade, intrusion of foreign religions (particularly Christianity and Islam), and colonialism. In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe captures the social, cultural, political, and even economic upheaval that followed these foreign interventions. In exasperation Achebe's character laments that these interlopers (mainly Western missionaries, colonialists, their ideologies, and modernity) have 'put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart' (Achebe, 1958:152).

One of the effects was on the loss of the sense of awe in nature. The appetite for natural resources to feed the industries of Europe and America led to the introduction of technologies that led to massive exploitation of these resources. Some of these were located in preserved areas such as sacred forests and groves. Land prospectors and developers have added their own pressure, complicated by the rise in population (Kalu, 2008:44). Also the introduction of earth-moving equipment in large-scale modern mechanised agriculture has not only (in the understanding of the local people) scared away the spirits, but has also had its toll on the environment, exposing it to erosion and other land-degrading elements.

When it comes to Christianity, some have blamed the social upheaval on the advent of a brand of evangelical and Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity which demonises everything African. Also, a distinctive of prevailing African Christianity (which Paul Gifford has branded 'fundamentalist') is the over-emphasis on personal salvation and other-worldliness. They preach millenarian dispensationalist (end-time) gospel with its emphasis on the soon-coming of Jesus Christ, and as such deflect attention from social ills, making them detached from present realities (Gifford, 1990:4).⁵ Interestingly contemporary Nigerian Christianity is not exempt from this strong eschatological hope in the rapture of the saints and the second coming of Jesus, and a hope of life in heaven.

The undermining of traditional African values has caused distortions that weaken customary governing institutions. The result being, for instance, that sanctions on issues of the environment are easily ignored with impunity with negative

⁵ Paul Gifford comments that 'the Pentecostal explosion has not only taken members from mainline churches, but Pentecostalsed these churches themselves' (Gifford, 1998:306).

consequences on the people and environmental. And having destroyed traditional institutions that held communities together, the attempt to keep social order by the agents of the new regime (of Church and State, represented by the church priest and police) have not been as successful. The introduction of the British Common Law appears ineffective compared to when the fear for one's ancestors and the associated sanctions under customary laws held sway. Laws and taboos at that time were unconsciously observed, being ingrained in the people's psyche, the community elders and the living-dead ancestor being the enforcers (Osuchukwu, 1995:19).

A different school of thought challenges what could be termed a postcolonial view that blames the demise of African cultures and general wellbeing on external forces, arguing on the basis of an internal rot. Ogbu Kalu certainly takes this view when he proposes that there was an intrinsic weakness in primal cultures and their eco-ethics. He argues that 'primal cultures *ab initio* contained ambivalent ethics and, therefore, responded to the challenges of nature in a vulnerable manner' (Kalu, 2008:43). Such vulnerability he further argues is a clear sign of the African's inability to exercise control over his (environmental) challenges.

Cases of such inability to exercise sustainable control over creation's abundant natural resources abound in Africa. For example, despite its abundant renewable and non-renewable energy potentials, Sub-Saharan Africa, especially, continues to suffer energy poverty (IEA, 2014:3). Its governments have been unable to harness their energy potentials to serve the needs of their people, with Nigeria as one of the underperforming countries. Furthermore, Celine Kauffmann (2005:1) had long pointed out that these countries, including Nigeria, prefer the exploitation and utilization of non-renewable fossil energy and biomass, as against renewable (solar and geothermal)

sources. This research shows how the exploitation of fossil fuels such as oil and gas is the major cause of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

Moreover, notwithstanding the years of experience gained from exploiting these natural resources the bulk of the technology used still comes from abroad? Thus, Africa remains largely the source of raw materials and manual labour, with little added value. Nigeria grapples with perennial fuel scarcity despite being one of the world's largest oil and gas producers. Its inability to improve its refining capacity has left it perpetually reliant on heavy importation of refined petroleum products at huge costs to the government and people (Obi and Rustad, 2011:21).

On a different note Ogbu Kalu (2008) questioned the idea that the awe and veneration with which Africans hold the natural world equates to stewardship. He believes that such veneration as a coping mechanism was equally a vulnerable response, as it was not augmented with resource-management procedures such as tree-planting or the replenishment of fish stock. Veneration in some instances became a tool for 'bribing' the gods to deflect their attention from the person tapping natural resources. Meaning that nature can be exploited as long as the gods are kept happy (Kalu, 2008:43-44).

The dire implication of such poor eco-ethic is painted by Ogbu Kalu when he says that:

In spite of various attempts to engage nature creatively, sacralization limited human responsibility to generate an ethic of preservation...[but]...On the whole, African spirituality celebrates an intimacy with the natural world and the intrinsic value of a religious culture...The response was awe. Awe led to sacralization; a consciousness of the divine determined the pattern of space-time events...The problem lies in the intrinsic nature of sacralization. It recognizes the aura in an object and runs away from a close contact, reserving it as holy and totally "other". (Kalu, 2008:44).

Deep in the heart of the problem, Kalu suggests, is that sacralization or consecration of nature encourages subject-object encounter that makes nature the strange 'other', which in turn exposes it to reckless exploitation, even if that requires 'bribing' the gods

to achieve this. Kalu thinks, this situation explains why, the West tired of its own enlightenment-driven modern science and technology paradigm, has looked over Africa to Eastern philosophies. Unfortunately eastern religions are not altogether as eco-friendly as their reputation, as 'even China with its Confucian and Taoist eco-centric wisdom, has been devastated by environmental abuse' (Kalu, 2008:44).

Despite the challenges inherent in the African worldview, there is ample contribution to be made by African philosophy to resolving contemporary environmental issues. For instance, the notions of individual and collective responsibility towards one's kin and the environment, of justice and equity, of respect for creation as God's dwelling place, and so on, do find resonance in Christian thought.

7.4 The Role of African Proverbs in the Construction of Knowledge

Proverbs, idioms, myths, folklores, and other wise sayings feature prominently in traditional African thought and conversation, and in the construction of knowledge (Healey & Sybertz, 1996:14; Ukoma, *et al*, 2016:323). This kind of oral-based knowledge production by wise persons, also known as 'African Sage Philosophy' (Masolo, 2013), are essential in communication and conveying meaning, and for educating the community. This is so with Nigerian tribal groups, especially the Igbo. This understanding is conveyed strongly by the African sage Chinua Achebe when says in *Things Fall Apart* that,

Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally (Achebe 1958:4).⁶

⁶ For those who are not familiar with palm oil, it is important to convey the point that palm oil which is derived from the oil palm seed is the basic (everyday), multi-purpose, lubricant of most homes. Before the introduction of vegetable oil extracted from various seeds palm oil was used in virtually every meal – especially for eating yam, the king of Igbo crops. It was also used as fuel for lamps, as lubricant for craftwork, and so on. Perhaps the most important cultural usage in my estimation is the role palm oil

This palm oil metaphor equates words (not the least, words of wisdom) with food. It reveals the value Igbo people place on words of wisdom as basic building blocks for sustaining life and for constructing a community's ethics.⁷ Thus, morality and ethics, including those related to environmental care, are built and conveyed in the course of the Igbo community's daily social interaction, which includes the use of proverbs (Ukoma, et al, 2016:326). Accordingly, argues Gyeke (2013), African ethics is social, and not individualistic. This is similar to Western ethics, as supported by Bertrand Russell and WFR Hardie. Their reading of Western ethics imply that ethics and morality, as social constructs, are products of their time and culture (Russell, 1945:174 and Hardie, 1968: 123).

Following from the above ideas of morality and ethics, every community therefore has its ways of expressing what constitutes acceptable behaviour or good character (Gyekye, 2013). These societies, including the Igbo, transmitted knowledge by oral traditions, in stories, proverbs, idioms, allegories, and so on. It was such that sometimes less was said through these proverbs and idioms, and yet more was understood. It has been noted by David Crystal (1995) that,

The effectiveness of a proverb lies largely in its brevity and directness. The syntax is simple, the images vivid, and thus easy to understand. Memorability is aided through the use of alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm (Crystal, 1995:184).

Essentially, African philosophy is based on oral traditions than texts (Ukoma, *et al*, 2016:323). Actually, until recently, much of African history was transmitted through oral tradition, with the exception of sophisticated languages such as Amharic, Coptic and Ge'ez, with signs and symbols for communication that were committed into

played in the eating of the kola nut. It was the basic coagulant used for making the peppery sauce for eating the kola nut. Furthermore, palm oil was used for medicinal purposes, including the massaging of aching bodies and the realignment or resetting of dislocated bones.

⁷ Morality and ethics are used here interchangeably to mean socially acceptable norms or patterns of behaviour.

textual forms (Oden, 2007:138-140). In the oral instance the body of knowledge, including their symbols, were woven into the fabrics of their daily lives and consciousness, confidently transacted and regulated by the collective conscience of society for which everyone had responsibility. These regulations which covered the utilization of natural resources were exercised through religious taboos and social sanctions (Burgess, 2008:30).

Patently, most Nigerian languages and cultures possess abundant environmental metaphors, as seen in the proverbs explored in this thesis. Ogbu Kalu posits that, African people:

understood their ecosystem so well that their proverbs and myths were suffused with imageries from the world of animals and nature...the socialisation model enable young people to know their ecology, its resources and challenges, and gain a higher level of sustainability (Kalu, 2008:71).

The effectiveness of this traditional system of morality and eco-ethics before things fell apart, was such that they need to be re-assimilated into the present ecological circumstances in the Niger Delta. This will help address the culture of violence to nature that is palpable in Chapters three and four of this thesis.

Another example of the influence of African tradition and culture is explored in the role of folklore and folk life in environmental education in Yorubaland by Ademiluyi and Asinyanbola (2012). They suggest that this body of knowledge was imbedded in the *Ifa* literary corpus, which was the vehicle for traditional education in the conservation of nature.⁸ They argue that there existed 'indigenous methods of educating and creating awareness on environmental issues in Yorubaland before the

⁸ They define traditional education as: 'the handing down of beliefs, customs, stories, etc. from generation to generation. It includes any long established customs or practice, which manifests in the forms of cultural expressions as songs, dance, stories, artworks, and crafts, as well as symbols, marks, and other recurring expressions of traditional concepts' (Ademiluyi and Asinyanbola, 2012:334).

advent and widespread of western education...largely through folklore and taboos...' (Ademiluyi & Asinyanbola, 2012:333). Despite the status of formal (western) education as the official means of education, they argue that 'no one learning system – formal, non-formal, and informal – can effectively cover the range of necessary awareness-raising' (Ademiluyi & Asinyanbola, 2012:333). Moreover, traditional education is not only intellectual, but also functional and pragmatic (Ademiluyi & Asinyanbola, 2012:334).

Modern African writers and poets such as Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide have even taken the route of reflecting ecological issues in their literary works, in terms of the beauty and challenge of nature (Dasylva, 2012:201-222). Dasylva (2012) stresses that:

The same issue of environmental degradation of a once beautiful natural habitat engages Ojaide when he refers to his childhood communal world as paradisaic...and bemoans the complete disappearance of the beauty, the comfort, the freshness, the fruitfulness, the security, the abundance that nature had offered humanity of his childhood days (Dasylva, 2012:218).

This excerpt shows how contemporary African scholars are using literary tools to promote environmental concerns. A couple of proverbs considered have already previously been introduced in Chapter One. They are *Ebe Onye bi ka O n'awachi* mentioned by some of the interviewees in this research, and *Egbe bere, Ugo bere*. The full text of the latter proverb is *Egbe bere Ugo bere; nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwapu ya*, which when translated means 'let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, whichever one prevents the other from perching, let his wings fall off'.

When it comes to the use of proverbs as a tool for constructing theology, Matthew Cook, *et al* (2010:65) argue that God is not against culture, instead that 'God has set us in culture'. For Healey and Sybertz (1996:28-29) proverbs are critical in this process as

a useful part of narrative theology, being that they encapsulate the people's culture, native wisdom, philosophy, and theology. They appeal to John Mbiti, who says:

Proverbs are a rich source of African religion and philosophy. They contain and point to a deep spirituality, as well as theological and philosophical insights. In this case they form a bridge between traditional African religiosity and biblical teaching (Healey & Sybertz, 1996:29)

Thus, despite the importance of culture in the process of contextualizing theology, it will be illusory to view it as 'determinative' (Cook, *et al*, 2010:x). Hence, there must always be an intervention of Scripture for any meaningful theology to be complete, otherwise the outcome will be anything but Christian theology. One criticism, for example, in the use of African proverbs is that most of them are a product and reflection of a patriarchal society that tends to treat women unequally with men. Critics therefore are demanding a revisioning of offending proverbs to ensure balance (Healey and Sybertz, 1996:36).

7.5 Unbundling the African Traditional principles for Creation Care, with emphasis on 'Ebe Onye Bi Ka O N'awachi' and 'Egbe bere, Ugo bere'

The principles of African communal solidarity and creation care have previously been introduced in both chapters one and two. Here we will investigate further the practical implication and outworking of these in the light of two significant indigenous proverbs that emphasize these principles. In Appendix One the survey data suggests that a third (67%) of Presbyterians indicated in TM15 (Part 2 of the survey) that, 'Wisdom from local cultures can be a resource for the Church's environmental action' (TM15).

Two notable proverbs from the Igbo cultural corpus will be fully investigated in this section. They are, *Ebe Onye bi, ka O n'awachi* principle of stewardship and personal

responsibility suggested during the interviews, and *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* principle of equity and justice (from published literature).

7.5.1 Ebe Onye Bi, Ka O Na-awachi

When asked in the interviews what *Ebe Onye Bi Ka O N'awachi* means, Rev. Benedict Ndekor (G27/2012/27) said, it means:

you should take care of your immediate environment. [Otherwise] if there is any loophole you will also suffer it.

For Elder O Omoba (C9/2012/11), it means:

Where you live is where you protect. So it becomes our responsibility to protect our environment, because if we don't protect our environment we won't do well. [In other words], 'Charity begins at home', and we normally say 'cleanliness in next to godliness'

Also, Mr Ifendu Imogen (H28/2012/47) echoes Elder Omoba's idea of 'Charity begins at home', emphasising that 'cleanliness starts from your immediate surrounding'. Both Mrs Felicia Ogbo (D15/2012/24) and Mr Ikere Ojiako (G16/2012/25) buttress the point about charity beginning at home in Igbo as meaning, 'Ana esi n'ulo ama mma tupu aputa na ama.' In addition, Mr Chi Nedu (G25/2012) understands this proverb to mean,

where a man lives he keeps and secures. Also another Igbo proverb...translates as 'you cannot be at home and abandon your goat to give birth while on a leash'. So, even the goat is dependent on man. So, too the environment is dependent on us. If you look at it from that perspective the church should represent God in the environment

A deconstruction and piecemeal transliteration of the proverb would see it read as follows: *Ebe* means place, location, or space. This can be anywhere: a native compound, farmstead, village, town, or even a city in the modern sense. *Onye* means an individual or person, while *bi* or appropriately '*i bi*' means to live or reside in a place. The verb *awachi* means to mend, plug, defend or protect, in the sense of

mending a fence. Therefore, *ka O n'awachi*, implies an individual's active performance of taking care of, or protecting, their surroundings.⁹

From the foregoing, therefore, *Ebe Onye Bi Ka O N'awachi* implies a strong connection or attachment to a place that demands action when that community or place is threatened. In other words there is the idea of rootedness, which evokes passion for a place and a sense of nostalgia for it. For some it means patriotism. Conversely, people do not feel obligated to defend, protect, or even conserve the resources of places they do not feel rooted in or connected to. Consequently, they are unconcerned.

The overarching ideas that the compound word *awachi* elicits are that of stewardship and guardianship. It is a verb-form that conveys the notion that when a person is given responsibility over a place, whether permanently or temporarily, whether with full or partial control, they, by default, also acquire some degree of 'ownership' and responsibility. This responsibility requires that such persons keep the estate in a secure state for as long as it is within their powers and discretion. It does not matter whether they are tenants or owners, the responsibility is the same. If need be, for existential economic and material (utilitarian) purposes, people will defend the place where they have such interests – whether they live there or not, but more especially if they live there.

Such is the sense that Nnaemeka Meribe, a doctoral student, evokes in the article he wrote in a Nigerian local newspaper, the Premium Times of August 10, 2013. He defended Igbo people's legitimate claim of contributing to the development of Lagos. In that article he debunks the argument of Mr Femi Kayode (a Yoruba politician) that

⁹ This is an unending task, as from time to time home owners have need to rebuild or reinforce their fences, having originally built them with perishable materials. The use of more durable materials such as bricks and cement mortar, and even metal, is a sign of the change that modernity has brought.

Igbo people had no significant contribution in building Lagos' economic and developmental power. Mr Nnaemeka argued that, although Igbo people were late-comers into Lagos, compared to the arrival of other non-indigenes,

'began to contribute immensely to the Lagos project...[when] Lagos became their new home in consonance with the Igbo philosophy of *'ebe onye bi, ka o na-awachi'* (One develops where one lives) (Premium Times, 2013).

The background is that Igbo people are known in Nigeria as one of the most enterprising migrant communities, who set up home wherever they are. There is therefore a sense in Nnaemeka's argument which indicates that being rooted confers a legitimate claim of belonging to a place, even though that is a vexatious issue in Nigeria as Ayuba Mavalla (2014:100-106) has pointed out.

Furthermore the philosophy undergirding this proverb places an obligation and responsibility on the individual to protect their place. As a result, Rev B Ndekor, believes that if we develop that

consciousness in our minds, maybe we shall not see it as for government, it is for us. So we start from where we are to start doing something. Even before going for government support (G27/2012/45)

Ndekor's view is therefore that, it is in the interest of all stakeholders, especially people in the community to defend their environment, and not wait for the government or oil companies. The experience of neglect of the environment by the government and oil companies (see Chapters three and four) is reason to not take their chances, opportunities and wellbeing for granted. Traditional wisdom calls for constant vigilance and proactive action of tending and taming the commons to ensure that their immediate surrounding and livelihood are not threatened. A lapse in concentration is likely to create a negative impact on the people and the environment. The sense of plugging a heaving dam is more of common sense and a sheer response

to survival instinct. Very few people would want to live under the threat of a reservoir whose dam could give way any moment.

While such expectation of vigilance by local communities is ideal, the reality of the situation, namely the enormity of the oil-related pollution and the expensive nature of its remediation should not be lost. Actually, such well-intentioned advice could also be deemed patronising, since it is owing to the vigilance and unrelenting campaign of Niger Delta communities that the issue of their environment has remained topical. However, only the government and oil companies have the expertise and financial muscle to bear the cost of its clean-up.

Nevertheless, David Bookless (2007:39) emphasises the biblical idea of the rootedness of all creation, especially humanity to the land. He posits that,

Majority of the Old Testament is about the interrelationship of people and place – chosen people and Promised Land. St Francis of Assisi talked of ‘brother sun and sister moon...The biblical narrative shows that there is, ultimately, no theology without ecology (Bookless, 2007:39).

Ebe Onye bi, therefore, is a reminder that belonging to the community of creation calls on human beings not to treat land and the rest of creation merely as commodity to be used, but to respect creation as God’s gift, and to play our role in that community.

7.5.2 Egbe Bere, Ugo Bere

Although it was not mentioned by respondents, another proverb of interest that advances traditional principles of eco-justice and sustainability among Igbo people is ‘*Egbe bere, Ugo Bere, nke si na ibeya ebela nku kwaya*’. It translates as ‘Let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, any that prevents the other should have its wings cut-off (or withered, or paralysed). According to Bertram A Okolo (1985:48),

This proverb emphasizes the people’s belief in peace and harmony as essential for the overall wellbeing of the people, and that every man should be his brother’s keeper. It is further related to the communal setting and the idea of collective

responsibility both at the basis of the people's traditional life. Frequently used in traditional prayers, the proverb encourages mutual co-existence and assistance.

The context of this proverb captures the relationship between two predatory birds in the jungle, with the justification of the application so-called 'jungle justice'. Yet there is an expectation of a certain level of civility that ensures that everyone's needs are catered for. The kite and eagle must recognise each other's right to exist. But the imbedded ethics applied to human relationships are plainly of justice and equity, peace and mutual coexistence as AC Areji and MC Anyaehie (2015:104-105) posit. In addition, Okorie Onwuchekwa (2013:220), explains, that,

The proverb is both social and ethical because it emphasizes communality, freedom, unity, peace, progress, order and strength. It encourages unity in diversity and shows that everyone as a member of the community is very important and has a particular role he must play for the collective good of all people.

By implication the kite and eagle represent different individuals or species sharing this common earth. Human beings are to recognise the gifts and talents that each person possesses, support them to flourish and not deny them the exercise and/or enjoyment of the same. It evokes the African communitarian spirit discussed in chapter two, and calls on human beings to not only coexist among themselves, but as well ensure that all members of the earth family are flourishing. It hints at bio-diversity and the interdependence of species in any environment. In the Niger Delta the relationship between humans and other species cannot be said to be cordial, as ecosystems are destroyed by pollution from oil. But, in a context of respect, mutuality, justice and peace, there is no place for selfishness and greed.

Cyprian Alokwu (2009:338) highlights two major areas that the *Egbe bere*¹⁰ principle can make a difference:

First, it has the restraining ability to minimize the occurrence of poverty since each member of the community being responsible for the other, simply takes what is needed for their survival. Second, it restrains human exploitation of nature since the mysterious force of nature could angrily react against humanity. Therefore, it is dangerous for one not to recognize the right of existence of others or to disturb the constant cycle of existence which affects the corporate existence of the earth community

Egbe bere is, therefore, not only of justice and equity, but also of a call for restraint, mutual love and care, which in practice are tools to eradicate poverty since every entity will be cared for. It places the burden on everyone to share what they have with their less privileged relatives. This *egbe bere* notion is expressed in another traditional idea of mutual support raised by Barrister Andrew Apple (G4/2012/37) known as '*onye ahala nwanne ya*' (translated, 'none should abandon their kin'). This tallies with the biblical notion of being our brother's keeper. From a Christian ecological perspective Henri Blocher (1984:184) expresses this idea, thus:

If man obeys God, he would be the means of blessing the earth; but in his insatiable greed ... And in his short-sighted selfishness, he pollutes and destroys it. He turns the garden into a – desert (cf. Rev. 11:18). That is the main thrust of the curse of Genesis 3.

The state of the environment in the Niger Delta as described in chapters three and four typifies this notion of human destruction, whether of the insensitivity of the government and oil companies, or of the greed of the oil *bunkerers* and saboteurs of oil facilities. Their actions lead to the degradation of the environment, rendering it unsustainable for future generations. But without the sense of a higher power (God) as the adjudicator between His Creation, the scenario would even be scarier. Human

¹⁰ From the Anambra Igbo dialect Alokwu uses *Egbe belu*, instead of the *Egbe bere* Central Igbo language I used.

beings will behave as brute beasts, and idea which Mark Lynas captured when he depicted humanity's ravenous impact on creation in even starker proportions:

With the primacy of Science, there seems to be less and less room for the divine. God's power is now increasingly been exercised by us. We are the creators of life, but we are also its destroyers. On a planetary scale, humans now assert unchallenged dominion over all living things. Our collective power already threatens or overwhelms most of the major forces of nature, from the water cycle to the circulation of major elements like nitrogen and carbon through the entire Earth system. Our pollutants have subtly changed the colour of the sky, whilst our release of half a trillion tonnes of carbon as the greenhouse gas CO₂ into the air is heating up the atmosphere, land and oceans. We have levelled forests, ploughed up the great grasslands and transformed the continents to serve our demands from sea to shining sea...Wherever you look, this truth is there to behold: pristine nature – Creation – has disappeared forever (Lynas, 2011:5).

This assault of humanity on the earth boomerangs on humanity in the sense that it threatens their life-support. The mess created is akin to what Rev Kalu Eme (I33/2012) construes as a kite defecating in its own nest. He used another local Igbo proverb to show disapproval, saying:

Egbe anagh aru uru, [or] anyu nshi, n'akwu ya. The kite does not defecate in its nest. If you look at its nest it is always clean (I33/2012/53).

This idea of a kite not defecating in its own nest may not be a scientific fact, but it goes to show how deep Igbo eco-ethic goes in envisioning a safe and healthy environment for all. Such notion of polluting the environment by our action is firmly rooted in the Igbo concept of sin, which is the compound word *aruru-ala*, meaning pollution of the land. Thus, in the Igbo worldview:

sin pollutes the individual or community (and hence the land) and must be cleansed to ward off the wrath of the gods. A person who commits sin is referred to as *onye aruru ala* (one who pollutes the land) (Burgess, 2008:48)

The belief is that that individual sin disrupts the community's harmony, which includes the people and their natural support systems, which is generally typified by the land. Therefore *aruru-ala* implies an assault on the land. Such assault already discussed fully in earlier chapters is experienced on different spheres – socio-political, cultural, economic, and environmental – all of which make up the concept of sustainability. It is

based on this disruption that the people are traditionally encouraged to make amend through sacrifices to ward off negative repercussions.

Lynas' commentary evokes another notion that is closely associated with *Egbe bere*, *Ugo bere*, which is a plea from the marginalised and powerless to their oppressor known as *biri ka m biri* (live and let live). This is a notion close to the idea of a creation that is groaning for emancipation from bondage (Rom. 8:22-23). Thus, notwithstanding what appears to be a helpless situation where the stronger oppresses the weaker species, there is embedded in the '*Egbe bere*' the notion of sanction for failure to adhere to norms of civility. It is not surprising that the offending bird in this proverb was to have its wings plucked or cut-off as punishment. This would demobilise it and prevent it from harassing other birds.

Despite Alokwu (2009) equating *Egbe bere* to the well-known legal environmental idea of precautionary principle, I would rather think that the second half of the adage that deals with environmental justice aligns it closer to the polluter pays principle (PPP) of environmental governance. This principle simply means what its name implies – the offender will have to bear the cost of their environmental pollution. It is useful to point out that besides the PPP and the precautionary principle, there is another legal principle known as preventive action. Indeed the latter two, if properly applied, 'helps to avoid environmental damage that triggers the PPP' (Grossman, 2007:3).¹¹

7.6 The Nature of the Local Holistic Ecotheology (LHE)

Drawing from both contextual and Christian theological resources discussed above, and from previous chapters, one can conclude that the provisions of the proposed

¹¹ I would like to refer the reader to the article on the subject by Margaret Rosso Grossman (2007) for a full treatment of these principles.

local holistic ecotheology shows concern for the wellbeing of people and the environment (the non-human creation). Thus, the LHE encourages the sustainable generation and distribution of mineral wealth, the enthronement of a just socio-political system that accommodates cross-sectional aspirations, and an economic system that caters for all. Hence, the earlier mentioned idea of holism.

Since this theology is contextually rooted in the people's experience, it is useful to emphasize that natural or mineral wealth is given by God, as a part of His creation, to people living in the land where such natural mineral wealth is found. It has been argued in this thesis (notably, Chapters three and four) that the natural wealth found in the Niger Delta has not adequately benefitted the people of the region (CSN, 2006). Money is a human device which should be best used to, flexibly, distribute resources in a society for the common good, and should not be used for hoarding wealth for individuals or companies. An ecotheology for the PCN, that speaks to the the Niger Delta, must include a theology of mineral wealth and a theology of money (mammon). But these are not as critical in the West as in Niger Delta for the following two reasons.

Firstly, Western economies are often not as dependent on raw mineral wealth as the developing economies (namely, Nigeria and its Niger Delta region). Consequently, a Western ecotheology (see Chapter Two) needs not concentrate so much on the economic dimension and its related challenges as is necessary for the ecotheology of the Niger Delta. These challenges were elaborated upon in chapters three and four.

Secondly, even when mineral wealth is important to a Western country, the extraction of that mineral does not, usually, result in so much pollution, due to better regulation and advanced technology. Besides, the minerals are often sourced from distant places,

and less-developed economies such as Nigeria. The ecotheologies in the West are focused on limiting consumption and its harmful effect (Heap & Comim, 2007:82-84), but much less on the problems of pollution associated with raw material extraction. Conversely, for the Niger Delta, a theology that emphasizes mineral wealth and its extraction is paramount.

As seen in previous chapters (especially Sections 3.3.5 and 4.5.2), corruption is a socio-cultural problem, exacerbating the issue of pollution. This takes the form of patrimonialism, otherwise known as clientelism or prebendalism, which makes corruption difficult to root out in African contexts, being rooted in a pervasive system of patronage and community solidarity (Joseph, 1987:64-65; Falola, 2003:80-83). This has been the case under successive administrations in Nigeria, especially under military dictatorship, as Ukana B. Ikpe (2000:146-147) argues.

When corruption becomes intertwined with the sense of community, those wielding political power blur the lines between what is public and what is private (Ikpe, 2000:147-148). Thus, they use instruments of state to favour themselves and people from their ethnic group. It is that system of favouritism that stokes feelings of marginalization, as disfavoured ethnic groups feel cut-off from the decisions that affect their economic and socio-political fortunes (Watts, 2004:59; Ako, 2011:45). However, the Niger Delta political elite have not fared better, as the case of the former Governor (now deceased) Diepriye Alameiseigha of Bayelsa State shows. He stole billions of naira from state coffers and was convicted for it (Ibaba, 2011:74).

Corruption undermines institutions of state, whether military or democratic (Joseph, 1987; Falola, 2003; Ibaba, 2011). It is therefore imperative that an ecotheology for the Niger Delta must include a suitable theology of ethics and of community. These are

more urgent in the Niger Delta to combat the pollution problem, compared to the West. This is because tighter regulation and stronger institutions make corruption less pronounced in the West, as a result these are not emphasized in the ecotheologies dominant in the West and laid out in Chapter Two.

An ecotheology for the Niger Delta must also include a suitable political theology. For example, it highlights how a federal system should or should not work; what share of the oil revenue should be given to the Niger Delta people and to the rest of Nigeria; who should make decisions for the Niger Delta on how their resources are used. These have been discussed under Sections 3.3.3 and 4.5.5. The political system in Nigeria is relatively young compared to those in the West. Hence, compared to the West, a stable and mature political system is more urgent to deal with the pollution problem in Niger Delta and this political system should be informed by a suitable political theology.

An ecotheology for the Niger Delta must include the ecclesiastical dimension in Niger Delta. This dimension is more crucial in Niger Delta than in the West because the governments in the West can take a good lead in dealing with the issues discussed, whereas in Niger Delta the government is much less effective, making the contribution of the church even more important and crucial.

Drawing from the above ideas means that an ecotheology for the Niger Delta must be holistic in nature. The importance of this holism has been captured differently by Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz (1996:21) as meaning 'inculturation-liberation theology that is inclusive rather than exclusive'. In their view, inculturation deals with cultural and religious phenomena, while liberation focuses on the political and economic. The local holistic ecotheology being proposed here encompasses these

elements, and includes Scripture, the experiences of the Christian community (PCN), the local culture, and the phenomena of socio-political and economic challenges in the midst of environmental degradation experienced in the Niger Delta.

Furthermore, the emphasis on holism in mission should encompass the five marks of mission. These marks, discussed earlier in Sections 2.2 and 5.4.3, include:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Each of these marks of mission serves specific functions that make up the whole, in a similar manner that parts of the human body are useful to the optimal functioning of the whole body.

One more facet of the LHE is that it is transformative in outlook. It identifies mirrors the fourth Mark of Mission which seeks to 'transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.' The principles of justice and equity, fairness and restraint, mutual love and care, as well as accountability found in both Christianity and the traditional way of life (discussed in preceding sections) would ensure that oppressive structures of society are not left unchallenged.

The 1983 Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Needs held in Wheaton, Illinois, USA, came up with the word 'transformation' to sum up the idea of holistic

mission (Tizon, 2010:74). Meanwhile, this notion of transformation had previously been embraced by the Lausanne Covenant in 1974, advocating that social concerns should be held in tandem with evangelism, or specifically proclamation (Woolnough, 2010:4-5). Consequently, this idea of mission emphasised transformation to human and non-human creation. Chris Sugden argues that,

‘Transformation is to enable God’s vision of society to be actualized in all relationships, social, economic and spiritual, so that God’s will be reflected in human society and his love to be experienced by all communities, especially the poor’ (Sugden, 2003:71)

The mission of the church must therefore involve taking the whole gospel to the whole world to transform the whole of creation. Remarkably, creation is said to be waiting (in bondage) for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19-22). However, such transformational participation of the church must be resourced with the right theological tool, namely the LHE.

7.7 Constructing a Framework for the Local Holistic Ecotheology (LHE) from Below

Traditionally, Christian theology has been constructed on the scaffold of Scripture (the Old and New Testaments), reason, Christian traditions, and the lived experience of the Christian community (Milne, 1982:72-73; Moltmann, 1985:xiii; Boff, 1998:66-67; Bevans, 2002:6; McGrath, 2011:101). These driving elements were powered by philosophies from the Northern hemisphere, until postcolonial scholarship began to challenge them and advance alternate views from the South. However, the received Northern theologies (old answers) were inadequate to respond to new questions or situations (Schreiter, 2015:2-3).

Thus, for this research, the received theology were insufficient (by themselves) to construct an ecotheology from below which reflects the local culture, the struggles and the experiences of the people of the Niger Delta. Paul Tillich (1967:60) advocated

holding '[people's] existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence'. The same could be said of Karl Barth who espouses a 'highly contextual theology of the Word of God' (Bevans, 2002:9). Thus, the need to incorporate relevant elements of the local culture and experience as important components for constructing the emergent local holistic ecotheology (Schreiter, 2015:19, 24).

Paul Gundani experienced those key components among Zimbabwean women mourners as he identified the emergence of a theology from below. Firstly, the women were Christians (from various churches). Secondly, they were united in their experience of grief and loss. Thirdly, their songs and dance were expressed within, and through, a cultural context (Shona). And, fourthly, their performances were rooted in the bible, even if not systematic (Gundani, 2007:43-49).

In this research, those same ingredients listed by Gundani (2007:43-49) were identified and employed to develop the theology from below. The church, in this instance, is the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria with its congregations in the Niger Delta. Their experience relates to the reality of environmental degradation around them, and how these impacted on their lives (Chapters One, Three and Four). It encompasses how these Presbyterians responded to the issues, and how they made sense of them theologically (Chapter Five).

From scattered pieces of subliminal theological reflections that were embedded in the raw interviews data to those of more structured theological views expressed in the quantitative (questionnaire) data Presbyterians showed their theological appreciation of the issues of the environment. These were pulled together in Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 to form a part of the scaffold for developing the LHE. Chapter six explored the

challenges the PCN has faced in the bid to make a difference in the Niger Delta. Chapter Seven served to harness the people's traditional perspectives from their local culture, traditional religions and worldview to provide the missing link to produce the LHE advanced by this thesis.

As was the case with the development of the received theologies from the northern hemisphere, an ecotheology for Africa must be contextually rooted in the traditions of the people, their existential experience, and sound reason, and must be in consonance with Christian Scriptures. Context must be understood from the perspective of a 'social location' (Bevans, 2010:6). In this case it is the Niger Delta, and specifically Rivers State.

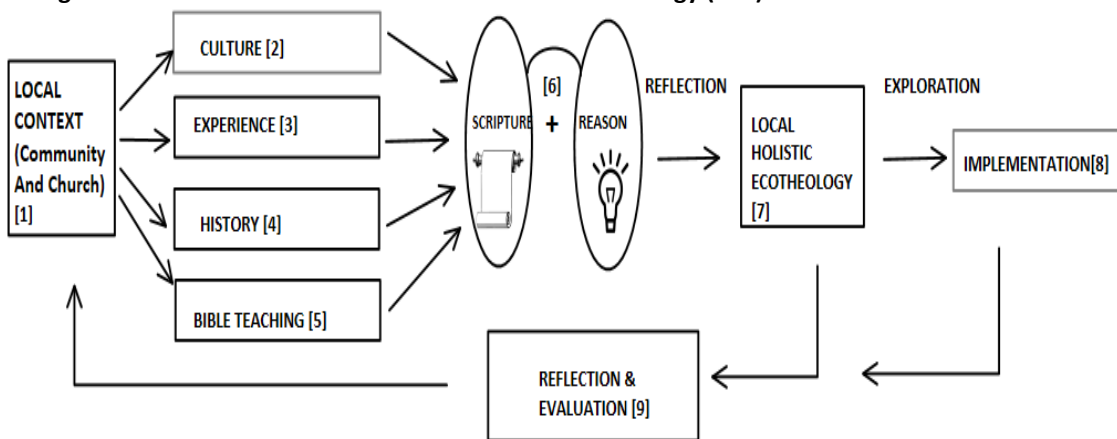
The LHE and the process leading to it have been inspired by models developed by Stephen Bevans (2002), Laurie Green (2009:19-26) and Matthew Cook, *et al* (2010:136). They see the process of developing a local theology, or 'doing theology', as a cycle that spirals from a local context and works outwardly to inform action. For Green (2009:24-25) the cycle will be incomplete without the 'Experience-Explore-Reflect-Respond' wheel. The complete process creates a new situation that begins its own spiralling cycle.

On his part, Osias Segura-Guzman (2010) developed his model for doing theology based on the combination of two different sets of criteria developed by Clemens Sedmak (2002) and the Ignatian Pedagogical process. The former has a cycle involving sustainability, appropriateness, empowerment, and challenge, while the latter comprises context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation (Guzman, 2010:134). Drawing from both sources, Guzman argued that 'good theology is practical theology...highlighting the interaction between theology and the context of the

individual' (Cook, *et al*, 2010: xvii). Thus, theology must speak to a local situation and provide answers to issues faced by people in that context. However, none of these speaks specifically to the Niger Delta situation. Hence, the need to develop the LHE.

Drawing from the above-mentioned scenario, an attempt has, therefore, been made to graphically present the local holistic ecotheology being proposed in this thesis. However, like Laurie Green (2009:25), I am aware that 'any diagram will have its limitations'. Thus, despite its imperfections the LHE framework presented here (Fig. 7.1) is an attempt to graphically illustrate the mechanics of this theology. The arrows show the direction of flow of the process leading to the LHE and beyond, in a cyclical manner.

Figure 7.1: The Framework of the Local Holistic Ecotheology (LHE)



The framework begins with the local (Niger Delta and PCN ecclesiastical) contexts (Box 1). The inclusion of the church as a key part of the local context is informed by the idea that the church is rooted in the community from where it draws its membership.¹² Hence, there is an inextricable intersection between the life experiences and stories of the church and community. Instances of this intersection are patently found in the

¹² Churches such as Bodo City PCN, anecdotally, draw about eighty percent of their membership from that locality.

stories in Section 4.2, that show how the impact of the Niger Delta crisis was felt by everyone, including Christians.

Boxes 2 – 5 are an elaboration of key elements constituting Box 1. Box 2 represents the local culture and worldview as discussed (Sections 7.2 to 7.5), and as noted, the dynamism and usefulness of cultural symbols, including proverbs, predisposes it to 'respond to contemporary concerns of people everywhere' (Healey and Sybertz, 1996:14). However, as Cook, *et al* (2010:x-xi) warn that, despite the importance of cultural location, it is inadequate to achieve a wholesome theology without the intervention of Scripture.

Box 3 covers the people's experience of pollution emanating from oil and gas exploration activities, leading to hardships and the incessant disruption to their enjoyment of life and a decent environment. Nevertheless, the usefulness of such experiences is underscored by their capacity to 'speak profoundly to the burning questions on the meaning of life, suffering, peace and human relationships' (Healey & Sybertz, 1996:14).

The political and cultural histories of the Niger Delta people represented by Box 4 speaks of marginalization and of deliberate neglect (see Section 4.5). But it also represents the stories and mission experiences of God's people in the region. Box 5 represents the foundational bible knowledge Presbyterians bring into this conversation. This was gained through bible classes, sermons, and so on (see Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2).

All of these contextual elements (Boxes 2-5) were subjected to the scrutiny and critical lenses of scripture and logical reasoning (Box 6). These were interspersed with periods of reflection, which includes further reasoning and prayer, involving the researcher

and inputs from the participants.¹³ The employment of Scripture at this stage was deeper and more systematic than the foundational bible knowledge the participants started with in Box 5. Thus, the process leading to Box 7, was suffused with the systematic doctrine of creation in Chapter Two, and supported by the subsequent theological discourses obtained from the participants through the instrumentality of interviews and questionnaires discussed in Section 5.5.

Key to this process was my role, as the researcher, in pulling together these resources to arrive at the primary goal, the LHE (Box 7). At this stage, that is the realization of the local holistic ecotheology (Box 7), the primary objective has been achieved. However, there are two further avenues to extend the process in order to maximize its potentials. Firstly, to feed back the resultant LHE to the local context through further reflection and evaluation (Box 9). This option triggers off a fresh process of scrutiny and review that will improve it, and also present the PCN (and any other church) the opportunity to adopt it.

Secondly, the alternative tract would be the progression of the LHE framework to an implementation stage (Box 8). This could take the form of the training of needed manpower, public enlightenment, advocacy to the key stakeholders, and also the reform of its (PCN) mission praxis (see Chapter six). These recommendations will be discussed further with practical suggestions in Chapter Eight. At this stage the process is back to the context through further reflection and evaluation (Box 9).

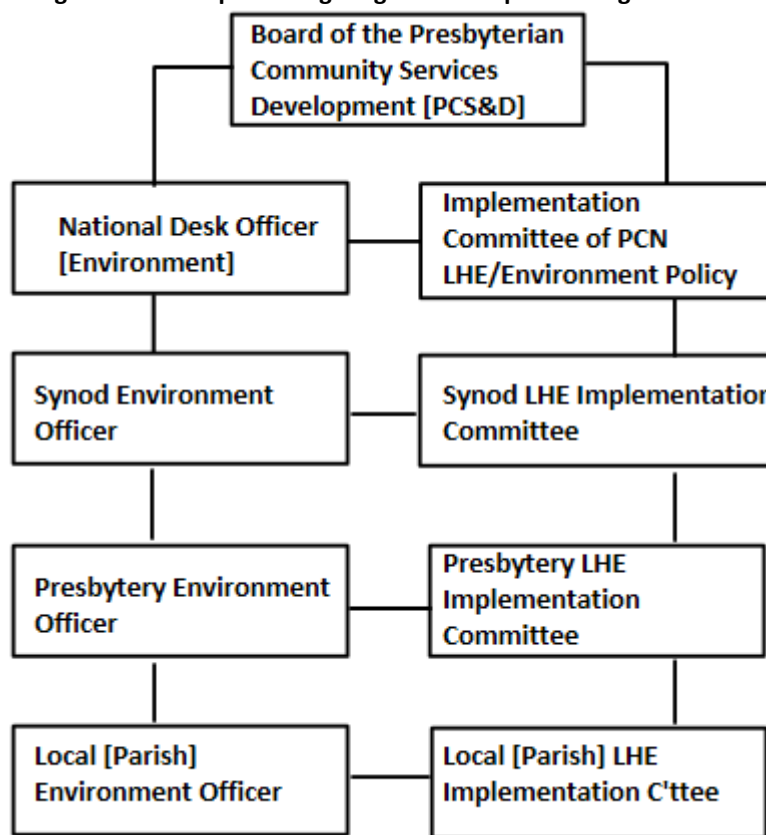
Consequently, the beauty of the LHE framework is that, although it has its abstract intellectual dimension, nevertheless it is functional and actionable. Together with the

¹³ From time to time my meeting with the participants was started with prayer. Also, as the responses in Chapter Five indicates that the participants showed deep reflection of Scripture and theology in their responses.

model for sustainability to be discussed in the next section, they present a platform for the church's broader involvement in environmental mission.

The test of the functionality of the LHE is its responsiveness and practicality in the field. For that reason an organogram has been constructed in Fig. 7.8 below to facilitate its implementation. This is an elaboration of Box 8 (implementation stage) of the LHE framework (see Fig. 7.1)

Figure 7.2: A Proposed Organogram for Implementing the LHE within the PCN



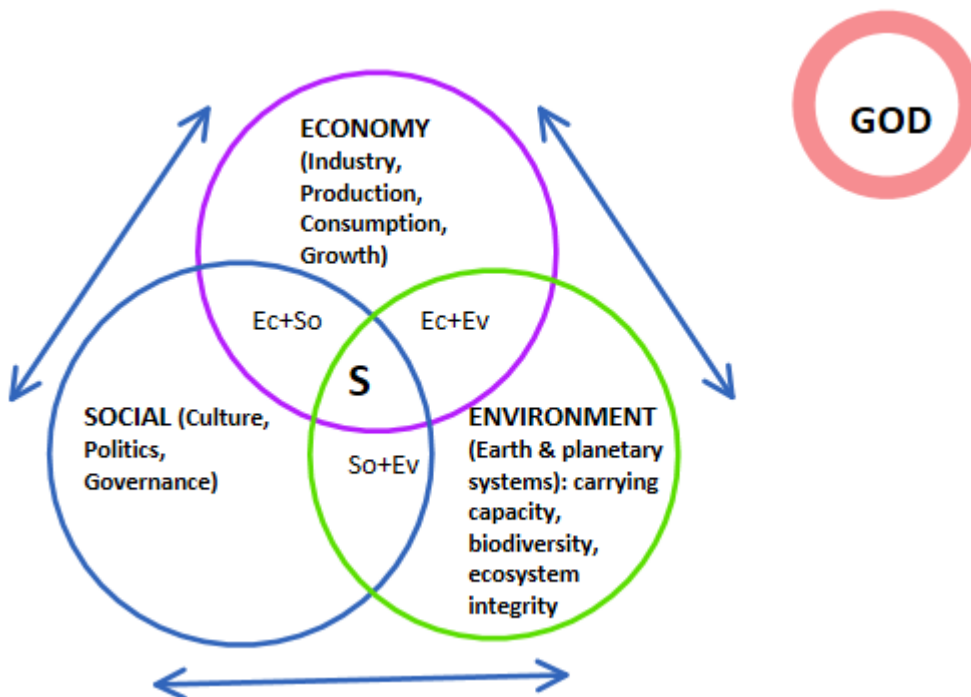
One of the original objectives of this thesis was to assist the PCN with resources that will empower it to respond to the issues of the Niger Delta environment. Thus, the organogram shows how the LHE framework can move from theory to praxis, and effectively deliver the desired result at all levels of the church and society. It incorporates the existing hierarchical structures of the PCN, with corresponding

environment officers. However, the strength and weaknesses of the LHE can only be fully known upon implementation. These will be discussed in Section 7.9.

7.8 Developing a Functional Model for Sustainability for a Broader PCN Involvement

Following the development of the LHE framework in the preceding section, one might wonder what tool the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) could employ for its broader and more effective intervention in the promotion of Niger Delta's sustainability. Fig. 7.3 depicts a common secular model of sustainability, with God totally absent, or at the best sidelined. This inadequate model calls for a new vision and model that essentially includes God.

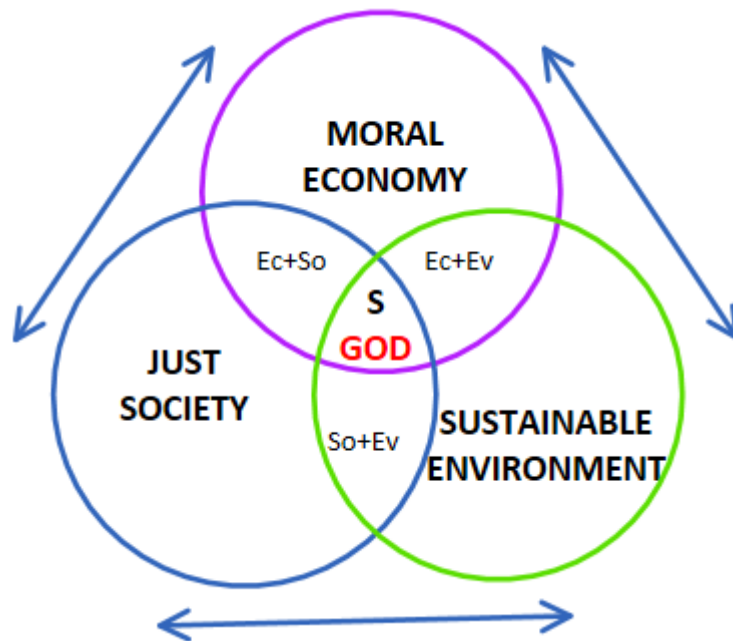
Figure 7.3: A Secular Model of Sustainability (without God)



Notably, despite differences in the respective traditions, traditional African religions and Christianity recognise that life is an intricate web which is beyond observable biophysical entities. It possesses a metaphysical dimension that links the spiritual and

the mundane. Thus, the LHE acknowledges the reality of a Creator who is actively involved in His creation, with an alternative vision of sustainability (S) in Fig. 7.4:

Figure 7.4: A God-centred Model of Sustainability [1]



God's involvement changes the nature and dynamics of the relationships of the key components of sustainability. It requires conformity to the standards of God's kingdom, of justice and equity for all God's creation (Marlow, 2009:192-208). It heralds good news to the poor and marginalised, and the much needed transformation in both society and the environment.¹⁴ Therefore, the involvement of the PCN should be approached from this alternate ecotheological framework, which promotes sustainability that is God-centred.¹⁵

¹⁴ This vision is driven by principles of biblical morality and ethics, which demand a change in the political cum socio-economic structures (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24). It demands that the powerful in society defend the weak, and make provision for them (Jeremiah 22:13; Luke 3:7-14; 19:1-10; James 5:1-6). On the whole, it is indicative of an ethic that is counter-cultural to the prevailing experiences of Nigerians, of marginalisation, dispossession, corruption, ecological damage, poverty, inequity, clientelism, a rentier economy and other ills, which Nigerians frequently lament about (see Chapters three and four).

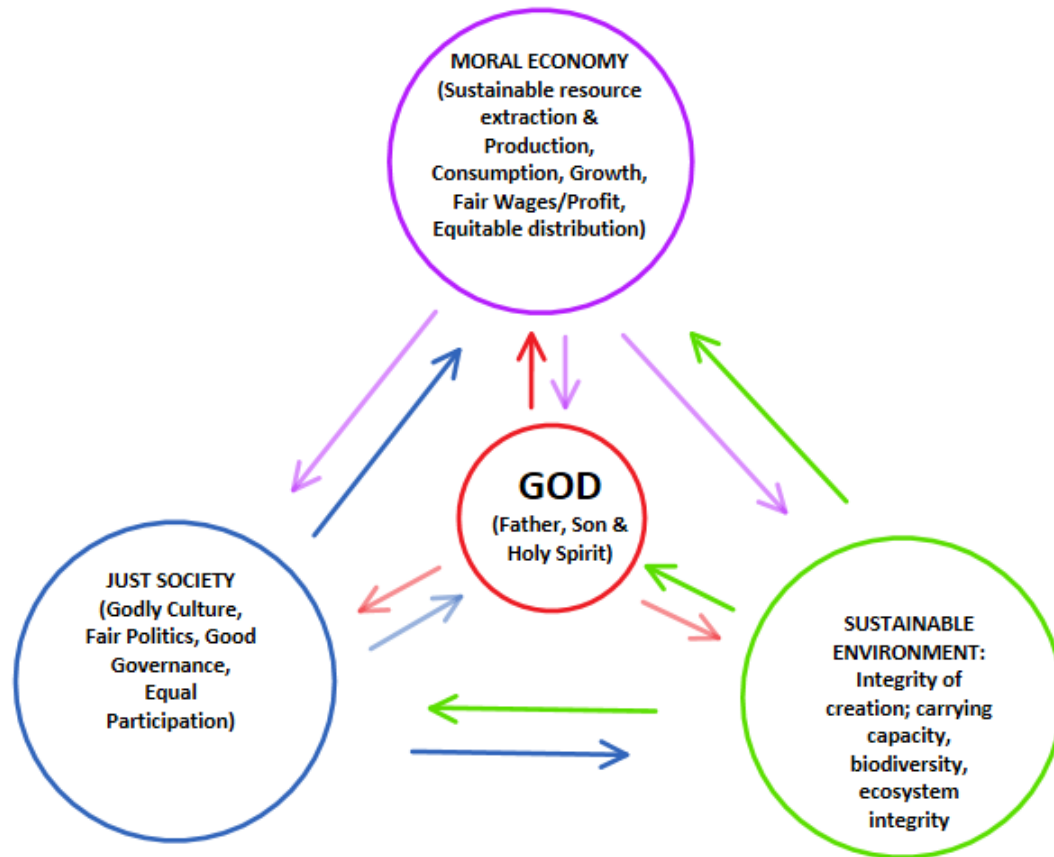
¹⁵ It recognises that He (God) is the maker, owner, and sustainer of all things.

And since God has revealed Himself to the world in the person of Christ, the emergent framework is actually Christocentric,¹⁶ as it revolves around the person of Jesus Christ, through Whom and for Whom creation was made (John 1:1-4, 10; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3; Rev. 4:11). Furthermore, it acknowledges the sustaining and renewing power of the Holy Spirit – a vision that is earth-protecting and life-affirming, giving room to all of God’s creation to flourish (WCC, 1989:9).

Fig. 7.5 further amplifies God’s relationship with the three key factors, namely, a moral economy, a just society, and a sustainable environment. The arrows, correspond to the colours of their respective factor, point to the direction of the flow of the relationship. God (at the heart of this model) supports and sustains the whole structure (Psalm 104:28-29), while the other three factors mutually support one another.

¹⁶ This Christocentric idea challenges the greedy anthropocentric (human-centred) secular model that deifies human beings (or even creation) instead of God.

Figure 7.5: A God-centred Model of Sustainability [2]



A just and egalitarian society that respects the rights of citizens and encourages equal participation will lead to fairness in the system. A moral economy means giving due care to how resources are extracted, produced and consumed (sustainably). It deals with how their benefits are distributed equitably to benefit everyone.¹⁷ It also ensures that those who bear the brunt of such extractive activities are commensurably compensated. These considerations will ensure that the environment is properly remediated, and not neglected as has hitherto been the case in the Niger Delta.

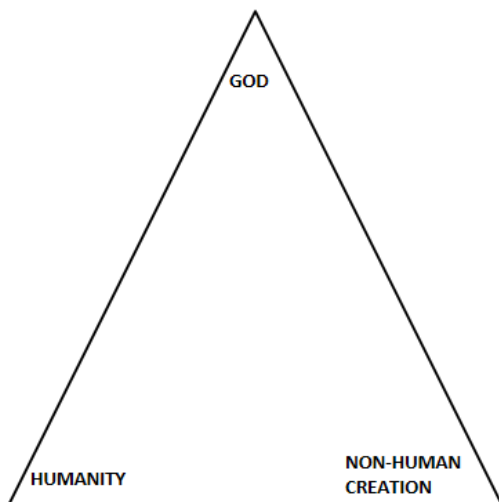
The ecotheology proposed here is also a wake-up call to all Nigerians to live lightly in God's world, taking those actions that make a huge difference to God's creation. It

¹⁷ The Christian environmental charity *A Rocha* advocating the concept of living lightly. They outline practical steps that individuals could take to make a positive difference to the environment. See <http://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/action/>.

means living as people who will ultimately give account of their sojourn on earth. Thus, it is a theology that is eschatological, pointing to a future of God's reign with ecological and social harmony - the strong and the weak enjoying God's peace and harmony (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Luke 4:37-41). The foregoing will deliver the right kind of sustainability, God being key to its realisation for human and non-human creation.

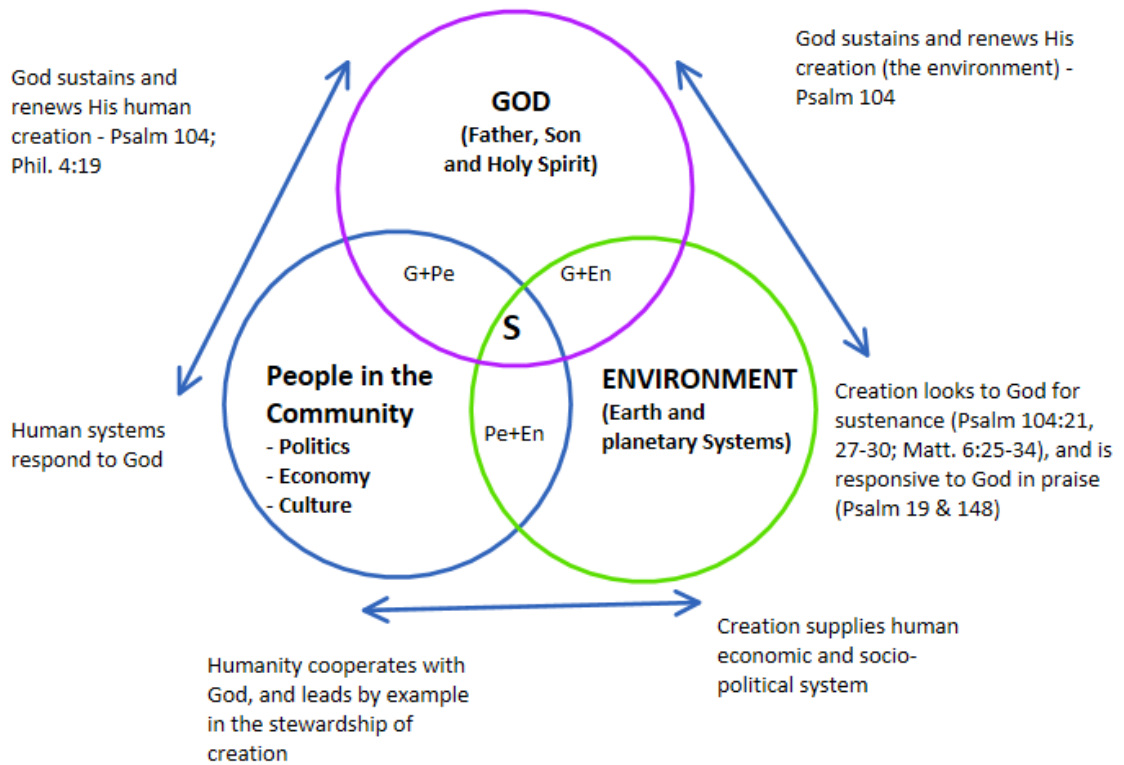
God's relationship with the human and non-human creation has been portrayed by some scholars as being triangular (Marlow, 2009:193), with God at the apex and humanity and creation at the bottom (see Fig 7.6).

Figure 7.6: Illustrating a triangular relationships between God, Humanity and the rest of Creation



The problem with that model (Fig 7.6) is that its structure could be interpreted to mean that the three entities are equal, and that their relationship is locked in. Despite God being at the apex, a rotation of the triangle will upset the structure and the balance of power. This problematic arrangement can be corrected with an alternative model with intersecting circles that recognises the distinctness of the entities (see, Fig. 7.7). It also drives home the idea that, although God is immanent within His creation, He is also transcendent over it.

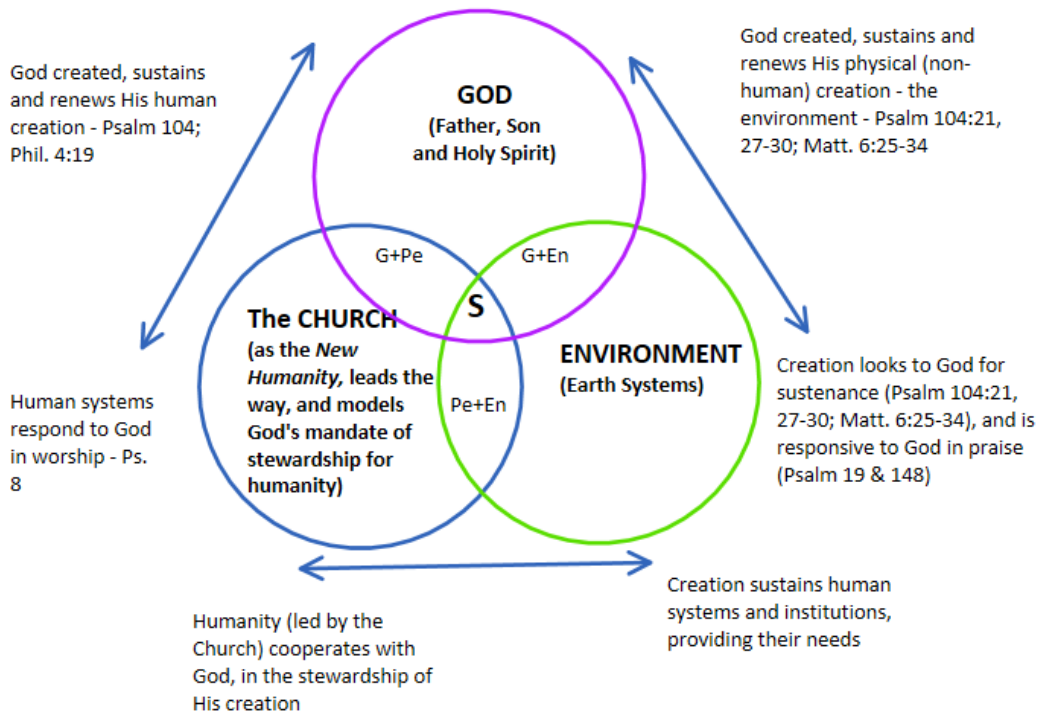
Figure 7.7: A Relational Model of Stewardship



It has been argued previously in Section 1.3 (and depicted by Fig. 7.3) that the prevailing secular model of sustainability leaves out God. That is why the LHE framework puts God back into the frame. Consequently, if the church desires to make an impact in the quest for sustainability it has to play to its strength by introducing this refreshing new LHE vision to the world. The church achieves this when it assumes its place as the new, redeemed, humanity, to lead the rest of creation back to God (see Section 2.8). This has been configured graphically in Fig. 7.8.¹⁸

¹⁸ Fig. 7.7 incorporates a model of the church as the new humanity, which, strengthened by her divine mandate as the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16), can begin to work towards achieving sustainability (S).

Figure 7.8: The Place of the Church as the New Humanity in leading the way towards Sustainability



In this model humanity and the non-human creation (the environment) support one another in a symbiotic relationship. And as they are sustained by God, they respond in worship. It is only when

7.9 The Potential Benefits, Strength and Weaknesses of the LHE

In several ways the desirability, benefits and strengths of the local holistic ecotheology and its functional framework have been promoted throughout this chapter. But it will now be given closer attention. First, the strength of the local holistic ecotheology (LHE) lies in the knowledge that it is biblical, being founded on principle of scriptural morality and ethics founded on the fear of God. It denounces greed, encourages sharing resources and mutual co-existence, being our brother's keeper, and caring for creation. Furthermore, it is theologically sound, being compliant with basic tenets of Christian theology.

Second, in addition to the biblical and theological foundations laid in chapter two, qualitative and quantitative data generated from among Presbyterians and other Christians provided contextual perspectives on the theology. Thus, it gives the theology rootedness and local ownership, and yet reflects core Christian perspective.

Third, the LHE is culturally relevant, having been founded on aspects of African sage philosophy described in Sections 7.2 – 7.5. It took into consideration traditional ideas of environmental care and social harmony to advocate community solidarity within the family of creation. This sense of identification is its main strength. These are represented in the inclusion of culture in the frameworks in Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, and 7.6.

Fourth, the LHE is functional and practical, and not just an intellectual exercise that is not actionable. That is why Chapter Eight highlights recommended action to all the key stakeholders, including the church. There is a very high probability that when these are implemented the people of the Niger Delta and their environment will be positively transformed. However, it must be acknowledged that knowledge does not automatically translate to action. Hence, the church and the key stakeholders must match words with action, by implementing these recommendations.

Notwithstanding these laudable attributes of the LHE, its potential weakness lies in the fact that its provisions have not been tried. It is only after it has been actioned that its potential weaknesses, if any, will be ascertained. Nonetheless, its pragmatic and functional attributes provides the LHE framework with in-built capacity for self-correction. It is not a closed model, but an open and flexible one, leading back to the context. It gives room for further reflection, exploration, and evaluation of the process

and its outcomes. Thus, it has been made robust and resilient with internal corrections.

The second weakness is related to the limitations outlined in Chapter Six. The church does not have the capacity to enforce compliance. Consequently, its involvement and potential impact could remain frustratingly peripheral without the support and involvement of the major stakeholders.

7.10 What can the church do?

In the light of the proposed local holistic ecotheology there are a number of key actions that the Presbyterian Church can take to enable its broader involvement in the resolution of the Niger Delta environmental crisis. These include a recovery of its original mission template, which involves a paradigmatic shift in mission understanding and practice; a robust, prophetic engagement with society; the reform of its ecclesiology; and the adoption of the proposed local holistic ecotheology. These will be given further explanation in the paragraphs that follow, but their practical outworking is given greater elaboration in Chapter eight.

The fundamental need of the PCN is to retrace its way back to its Church of Scotland missionary roots, to recover the heritage that made it a champion for education, medical work, agriculture, and social justice (Sections 1.5 and 5.4). This heritage suggests that, if issues of the environment were paramount at that time, those early missionaries, such as Rev Hope Waddell and Mary Slessor, would have championed it as well. It is noteworthy that the PCN's recent mission history suggests that the church still has a passion for social action – as it took on the HIV/AIDS challenge and became one of the foremost providers of intervention services, through its Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS & D) directorate. It is, therefore, surprising

that the church has not drawn inspiration from its antecedence to inform a systematic involvement in the resolution of the Niger Delta problems.

Its job, having now been made clearer with the proposal of this local holistic ecotheology, the PCN should now adopt it as its mission paradigm for the Niger Delta. This means adopting and incorporating this theology as a key pillar of its holistic theology and mission. It means a deliberate paradigmatic shift that will require all tiers and levels of its ecclesiastical structures to agree on this holism, which entails a broader view of soteriology that encompasses the liberation for human beings and all of God's creation.

Consequently, the PCN needs a robust prophetic engagement with society to transform its oppressive structures in the socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres. This indeed is a response to one of the five marks of mission. John Calvin, PCN's reformed ancestor, did that in Geneva in spite of the dangers to self. In his commentary of Paul's epistle to Titus, Calvin¹⁹ noted the obstinacy of the people of Geneva, like Cretans, when challenged to change their ways (White, 2015:117-118). It is evident in those texts that, in order to challenge the corrupt structures of his society, John Calvin needed the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, he argues that it is a call from God on all believers, 'without exception', (ordained and lay) to resist evil:

For although God has only assigned some the task of exhorting, warning and reproving those who go astray, he also commands private individuals to resist evil, according to the means and the opportunity given to them. If that is the case with those who have no public duties, what of ministers whom he has specifically charged with this responsibility (Calvin, 2015:117).

Bearing in mind the reformed notion of the priesthood of all believers, the reference to ministers would apply to ordained ministers of the Word and Sacrament and to

¹⁹ This was translated from the original 1561 French version by Robert White in 2015.

every Christian. They are to speak truth to power, defend the powerless in society, and seek to transform the structural issues that make society evil and dysfunctional. Also, since it is only the faith community (in this case, the Church) that appreciates God's mandate to humanity for stewardship of creation, they alone can be God's mouthpiece in the world. Indeed, we are reminded by Scripture that creation is groaning in expectation, waiting for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19, 22).

The obstacles militating against the involvement of the PCN discussed in Chapter 6, include scarce human and material resources. Such incapacities mean that the church has to recognise that it lacks the capacity to independently take on the the government and the oil giants. And for reasons related to political and security considerations (Section 6.2) it can decide to limit its involvement to purely environmental education and the creation of awareness about the issues, and preferring solution with moral suasion.

A local holistic ecotheology for the Niger Delta can only translate to a better care for the environment if it is effectively reintegrated into the nation's social consciousness. For this reason the PCN should develop an integral system of environmental education, that incorporates biblical theology and local wisdom, which is familiar to the people. The PCN can propose this through a well-constructed Christian education curriculum, which will be applied, beginning at the basic family and community informal level to the formal school system. The church in Nigeria will need to step up its advocacy for the environment and for the weak and vulnerable. Furthermore, the PCS&D had for some previous (HIV/AIDS) projects developed a Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) template that can be adapted and reused by the church (PCN) to transform its participation in the quest for a sustainable environment (see Section

5.5.3). Thus, the greatest contribution the church can make is in the area of moral persuasion, lobbying, advocacy, and education. The church has the added advantage of drawing from Scripture and existing traditional principles of creation-care, identified in this thesis, to do this. The PCN can help rebuild community solidarity in places where there have been inter- and intra-communal crisis. It is important to caution that environmental education and advocacy are not sufficient by themselves, as there are many groups, government and non-governmental organisations embarking on these. Ernst M. Conradie (2013b:115) similarly argues that, 'knowing what is right does not always translate into doing what is right'. Even the notion of change associated with behavioural modification has its limitation in a sin-blighted world. Hence, environmental issues become the avenue for the church to preach the gospel of the saving grace and transforming love of God. Only a life transformed by the love of God in Christ can fully appreciate that love, with the generosity to share it unconditionally with others.

Ernst Conradie suggests, from an environmental governance perspective, that the pressure to ensure compliance should be applied with increasing measure. Despite being outside the jurisdiction of the church, the PCN will do well to support the government in the implementation of these measures which range from education and awareness creation, to marketing solutions. The next level would be the application of management theories. If these measures fail to resolve the problem, Conradie (2013b:115) proposes the application of punishment and penalties – the kind stipulated under the Polluter Pays Principle. These include taxes, fines, and even criminal charges.²⁰ However, it is important to remind ourselves of the limitations the

²⁰ See Section 7.5.2 for earlier discussion on the PPP

church is likely to face, namely that some of these suggestions are beyond the jurisdiction of the church to enforce. Nevertheless, the PCN can position itself to support the government and the public in the implementation of all necessary measures.

The PCN's ability to drive the above suggested actions will be dependent on how far it can continue to reform its ecclesiology to make it serve the needs of the twenty first century. This has admittedly been done in the past when desks, departments and directorates were created for specific roles. In this case, it has to transcend the creation of an environmental department, to involve a wholesale adaptation of its received theology, policies and operations to make them environmentally friendly. This will transform its office operations, the running of manses, meetings attendance, and the logistics involved.

In other words, the care for creation will become part of the church's nature, running through all its structures down to its members at the grassroots. They too will need to be conscious of how their daily choices and actions, and how their resource consumption impact on the environment. Basic information, such as what constitutes their own carbon footprints, will need to be disseminated.

7.11 Conclusion

Because of the range of problems enmeshed in the environmental pollution of the Niger Delta, it has been argued in this chapter that an ecotheology for the Niger Delta should be holistic in nature, connecting the socio-cultural, economic, political, and ecclesiastical dimensions. It has also been suggested that this holistic nature of ecotheology is more urgent in the Niger Delta than in the West in order to make a broader impact across the spectrum of issues involved. It provides the body of Christ,

particularly the PCN, with the intellectual framework to assess its current praxis, and more importantly, the armoury to prosecute its future engagement.

The notion of *Egbe bere, Ugo bere* gives a local holistic framework for social, economic, political, and environmental justice and harmony. It says there is enough space for Nigeria's bickering tribes to live and flourish if only justice and equity is upheld, to give each person their due irrespective of where they come from. Consequently, a local holistic ecotheology that incorporates these cultural elements is suggested for the Niger Delta. This is what the church can use in its advocacy and education of the people, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of sustainability. While the framework to guide the PCN to achieve this has been outlined in this chapter, the practical steps of how this can be made functional have been outlined in Chapter eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY

FORWARD

8.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the entire thesis and makes a final case, with practical suggestions, for a broader involvement of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in solving the environmental problems in the Niger Delta. This is because there is space in the current environmental discourse in Nigeria for alternate, but hitherto silent voices. The PCN's unique contribution arises from a rich ecclesiastical and mission history that is relevant today as it was in the time of the early Scottish missionaries. With the new environmental paradigm taking hold at the grassroots of the church there is every reason to be hopeful that the quest for sustainability in the Niger Delta will receive the necessary grassroots support in the church. Also the data reveals a shift from the traditional understanding of mission as evangelism alone, to a more holistic approach that takes into account the daily challenges facing the people they minister to.

Exploring the ecological landscape of the Niger Delta in the previous chapters has revealed the complex issues causing and entrenching unsustainability in the region. A further investigation in chapter five discovered that the response of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has in reality been tangential to the core issues of oil-related pollution, yet there were revelations of potentials that exist in the church for broader involvement of the Church. In chapter six emerged challenges against the church's potential response.

It is no longer news that the world's environment is a dangerous place for this present generation, but more so for future generations. Their prospect to survive is made even dimmer by the unsustainable actions of previous and current generations. These

actions comprise activities that pollute and degrade the environment. There are also inactions, being the attitude of neglect and the choice to not do anything, hoping that the problem will resolve itself with the passage of time. That is why a local holistic ecotheology from below has been suggested to help the Church make its contribution towards a resolution. The justification is that, if human beings have contributed to the parlous state of the global commons, then it is their duty and responsibility to act urgently to mitigate the same. For example, anthropogenic (human induced) climate change has been recognised as one of the major contributors to environmental degradation. The question then is why should Presbyterian Christians be concerned about 'saving the earth'? Simply, that the earth matters to God. Therefore, they need to be involved in God's mission. Furthermore, this chapter carries recommendations that moves the discussion from theory to praxis. Chapter Seven established and suggested a functional ecotheological framework on which the PCN and its congregations can base a robust involvement in resolving Niger Delta's environmental problems. This follows the recognition in Chapter Six of debates and obstacles that can potentially limit such PCN ambition to make a difference. However, establishing a framework, with the best will, does not automatically translate into immediate results, thus, this chapter provides a practical way forward. And despite that the recommendations are primarily targeted at the PCN, they are framed in such a manner that makes them transferable and applicable in any other church context.

8.2 Major Contributions of the Thesis

There are three key contributions to knowledge this thesis has made. Firstly, it has added to the body of scholarship on the Niger Delta environmental problems, by investigating, for the first time, the response of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to that crisis. The thesis has also highlights the strategic importance of PCN's Reformed

tradition in that discourse. It argues that the PCN's mission history and its antecedence in responding to humanitarian crises predisposes it as a reliable change-agent in society.

Secondly, the thesis has made a contribution towards the development of a local holistic ecotheology from below for the PCN in particular, and the Niger Delta in general. An ecotheology for the Niger Delta must be holistic in the sense that it must include the economic dimension (mineral wealth), the socio-cultural dimension (corruption), the political dimension (governance) and the ecclesiastical dimension (the church). This holistic sense of such an ecotheology is more urgent in Niger Delta than in Western contexts. This suggested ecotheology has been developed from the experiences and resources gathered from the grassroots level, especially amongst Presbyterian Christians in the Niger Delta. Drawing from the people's experiences of socio-cultural, economic, environmental privations, and using local proverbs, an attempt has been made at constructing a local ecotheology that is respectful of these experiences from a holistic perspective. Unlike the emphasis of ecotheology in the West that is primarily consumer life-style driven, this brand of ecotheology takes into account the people's daily struggles. And unlike Western democracies and economies that are advanced and matured, Nigeria's systems are still at its infancy and is challenged severally by developmental and governance issues. Because of these, any attempt at an ecotheology that does not reflect these challenges is flawed, untrue, and geared to fail.

The third contribution the thesis makes is in the area of providing the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria the intellectual and theological resources to prosecute a broader involvement in the issues of the environment. Drawing from the local culture and its

own Reformed traditions makes such a theological framework easily recognisable and not a strange introduction from abroad. Furthermore, this chapter ends with practical recommendations that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria can implement to make its response specific, measureable, attainable and time-scaled. But beyond the PCN, this thesis has the potential of assisting the body of Christ to make a difference.

8.3 Recommended Action:

Even if it wanted to keep silent there are physical, missional, and pragmatic social reasons why the PCN cannot afford to stand aloof while people and the rest of creation are groaning under the weight of degradation in the Niger Delta. But results can only be possible when the following axiomatic action points are pursued.

8.3.1 Re-visioning of a new PCN Mission Strategy

As the scope of contemporary mission continues to take on new meaning, the agenda set by the PCN has to reflect prevailing realities. Issues of the environment have long been domination mission agendas, at least in the past four decades since the WCC launched its Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation in the 1980s. The environment, being a topical issue in the Niger Delta and indeed the whole of Nigeria, is now beckoning on the PCN to adopt it as a part of its core mission thrust. Actually, it has the potential of earning the PCN the trust of the Niger Delta people, and to potentially win them over to its fold if the church shows interest in their welfare.

Biblical evidence outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis point to God's unfailing love and commitment to his creation. He made it and is committed to preserve it into the long term future. Similarly, they indicate God's assignment to humanity as caretakers of creation as both his vice-regents and vice-gerents. Human beings work in cooperation with God to renew the face of the earth. The Church caring for God's creation is,

therefore, a mark of true obedience to the expectation of her Lord who created all things and loves His creation passionately, and is still actively sustaining it. As such the PCN will be declaring the coming of God's kingdom and the fulfilment of God's vision of justice and peace for all. Complacency is not an option as the Master requires workers in His vineyard to produce fruits that justify the responsibility placed on them.

It is tantamount to disloyalty and repudiation of its own mission history and tradition, if the PCN fails to respond to the current environmental, economic and socio-political challenges facing the Niger Delta. If the visionary Scottish missionary, Mary Slessor, could challenge the society of her day in the Efik-Ibibio axis and effectively stopped the killing of twin children and the culture of ostracising their mothers, today's church has no excuse why it cannot champion the cause of the environment.

8.3.2 Liberating the PCN Liturgy

For the church to effectively engage with issues of the environment it has to liberate its received forms and traditions from its overly Western orientation. The church's call to bear witness to Christ within the African context must reflect true African authenticity. Its liturgical rubrics must also be delivered from the burden of drudgery and mechanical worship to become a living experience that transforms the life of the worshipping community. Its Reformed tradition frees it from these shackles, and gives it the impetus to borrow resources from other traditions.

8.3.3 Observance of an Annual Emphasis Week/Sunday for the Environment

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has the tradition of observing special days and weeks to lay emphasis on particular ecclesiastical and secular issues affecting society. During that special time of the year the respective groups in the Church (men, women, youth, and children) are given room to lead worship, run bible studies, mount

awareness events, and so on.¹ This culture therefore lends itself to the PCN's adoption of the UN-backed annual World Environment Day on June 5. The week presents the church an opportunity to draw emphasis on the issues of the environment in the Niger Delta, country-wide, and globally.

8.3.4 Establishment of a Coordinating Environment Desk

The PCN needs to set up an Environment Desk at their national office to provide leadership and coordination on environmental issues. They will produce teaching and outreach resources to give support to local congregations. The dearth of manpower in this sector as highlighted in *Section 6.3* can be resolved at the initial stage by drawing on existing resources in the Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D). PCS&D's interventions on other social and humanitarian issues such as women empowerment and HIV/AIDS advocacy have been effective and commendable. But a permanent solution to the manpower deficit would be to train a named person

¹ A list of these events, in addition to liturgical calendar days, found in its annual diary and directory (PCN, 2013:332-355) include:

1. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – 3rd week of January
2. Mother's Day – Usually 2nd Sunday of March
3. Health Week/Medical Sunday – around the 4th week/Sunday of March
4. Mission Sunday – The Sunday closest to the 29th of April
5. Bible Society Sunday – 2nd Sunday of May
6. Children's week/day – usually last week of May and the Sunday nearest to the 27th (National Children's Day)
7. Fathers' Week/Day – about the 3rd week/Sunday of June
8. Youth Emphasis Week/Sunday – usually last full week/Sunday of August
9. World Communion Sunday – 1st Sunday in October
10. Christian Girls in Training (CGIT) week/day – usually last Sunday in October
11. Christian Home and Family Life Week – 1st full week of November (plus the ensuing Sunday).
12. World HIV/AIDS Day – 1st of December. Usually the whole week up to the ensuing Sunday is reserved for awareness on the subject.

for the environment desk, who will in turn transfer those skills to corresponding officers at lower levels of the church.

And although the ecclesiastical structures of the PCN have been criticized by Mrs Chika Uka (G23/2012/34) as being mechanical and insular, actually those structures make it easier to appoint environmental advocacy officers at parish, presbytery and Synod levels to work with the national Desk Officer for the Environment. These officers will drive home the church's policies and create the necessary awareness for effective grassroots mobilization.

8.3.5 Improved Internal/External Communication and Education

The problem of ignorance of the church's programs and that of the lack of visibility in the public domain is more a problem of communication than of the structures of the church. Responding to the environmental challenge brought out the disconnection existing between the structures and levels of the church. If the PCN hopes to mobilise its members to actualise a robust environmental mission, it must begin with effective internal communication if its programmes to its grassroots. The problem of external communication with the public would partly be solved if the church increases its visibility in the public media. Mr Andrew Apple (G24/2012/37-38) suggests placing the PCN communiques in more prominent pages of the national dailies. But they will have to deal with the extra cost implication raised by Mrs Uka (G.23/2012/34).

8.3.6 Prophetic Engagement and Advocacy

The nature of the Church as the 'salt of the earth' (Matt. 5:13-16) means it will be antithetic and teleologically inconsistent for the PCN to not do anything about the environmental issues facing the world (Niger Delta) around it. How can it look away when the groaning of creation is everywhere in the Niger Delta? Will the church not be

failing in its calling to share God's love, if it does not express the same to the oppressed people? Is it not this love that will propel it to challenge the unjust structures of the society? Moreover, given that the plight of the Niger Delta people affects members of the PCN makes it imperative for the church to be concerned? Evidently the PCN has to stand with the poor and marginalised and fearlessly speak truth to power. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, they need to represent their Lord and King to make his kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven.

8.3.7 Networking with Ecumenical and Civil Society Partners

The PCN should take advantage of its existing ecumenical solidarities, locally and internationally, to help its action on the environment. Its membership of bodies such as CCN², CAN, WCRC, and so on, provides it with a platform to work with its partners to create the critical mass needed to make a difference. Following such laudable history of cooperation these church could share the cost of launching an environmental project by pooling their resources together.

8.3.8 Developing an operational Environmental Policy

The Presbyterian Church must live by example, if it would convince others of its seriousness, or wish they did things differently. This means drafting a coherent environmental policy that will govern its own impact on the environment. This policy, together with the LHE, will help the church's intervention in the Niger Delta environmental crisis. This policy will regulate how the PCN handles issues such as its

² In the 1960s there was an aborted church union in Nigeria involving mainline protestant church – the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches (Johnston, 1988: 132-159). But the enduring element of that ill-fated union was the establishment of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) that has provided them a forum for interaction, fellowship and the resolution of issues. This has become the platform for ecumenical relations among these churches and a few more of similar persuasion that joined the council subsequently. Their collaboration led to the joint partnerships in theological education (Trinity Union Theological College in Umuahia, Abia State), joint chaplaincy in the military, health and educational institutions, and so on.

carbon footprint an on travels,³ the use of resources, waste management,⁴ and its (ethical) investment policy, and so on.

8.4 Recommendations to Civil Authorities

Apart from arguing for the involvement of the church this thesis recognises that this is only possible when instruments of state are persuaded to open up the current narrow space for more intervention. Actually the unending crisis with its dire economic, environmental and socio-political consequences has already signalled to the government of Nigeria that it cannot solve the problem alone – at least not militarily, as it presently is. Hence the introduction of the beleaguered amnesty program.

If the science community and the United Nations have recognised that climate change and other environmental issues are no longer the exclusive preserve of scientists and environmentalists⁵, then the Nigerian government must come to this realisation too. Thus, they need to partner with the faith community on issues of the environment. It is necessary for environmental and rights NGOs to also acknowledge that they cannot achieve their goal by themselves, they need to reach out to churches in Nigeria. Actually the PCN can play a role in facilitating a better between all stakeholders NGO-Government and Government-Community relations from the usual adversarial position it has assumed. The result is an effective partnership that will lead to a grand coalition for the environment.

³ Related to the computer challenge is the need for the use of the internet. Could the church begin by enhancing its online presence? Could the use of modern telephony and internet protocols help to reduce those wastages of life and properties? My online involvement shows that many Presbyterian ministers and members using social networks to connect with one another and to publicise some of their activities. This is the right direction to go.

⁴ The volume of printed materials in the church is another area of concern as it encourages waste of paper and impacts on the sustainability of our forests. Has the church (PCN) put in place a policy that ensures that only important materials are printed, especially to reach people in the rural areas that are still not hooked to the internet? How much does the church encourage the storage of documents in soft (electronic) mode and not on hard printed forms?

⁵ See: 1. [washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/17/AR2007011701731.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/17/AR2007011701731.html), and <http://www.un.org/climatechange/blog/2015/06/un-chief-welcomes-encyclical-pope-francis-calling-swift-action-climate-change/>.

Pragmatic social advocacy by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) without input from faith communities is inadequate. There is need for the PCN (and all churches) and environmental and rights NGOs to synergise their efforts to achieve the common objective of sustainability in the Niger Delta. This means that the church for ordinary altruistic reasons has a mandate as a responsible pressure group in society to proactively advocate for the wellbeing of the marginalised. The local and international networks of the PCN gives the Church an unassailable advantage in holding the government and multinational oil corporations to account in a way that ordinary people cannot. But the Church needs to be bold, and to use all the forces at its disposal, to ensure this.

However, it has also been acknowledged in this research that the church has structural and capacity limitations that affects its involvement. The burden of ensuring a lasting solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta is actually on the government (at all levels), both because it is the primary beneficiary of the revenue from oil and gas extraction and because it has the instrument of state to require and ensure compliance to rules. Indeed, government alone has the capacity to enforce the rule of law. Any excuse otherwise, is only a pretence to continue entrenching the state of neglect that ensures the unsustainability of the Niger Delta environment.

The government, in its parental role, should apply more carrot than stick in dealing with the aggrieved communities and their militant youths. The use of excessive force that militarised the whole of the Niger Delta region at some point in the 1990s only served to fuel more violent response from the youth. Hence, the amnesty offered the militants by the Yar'Adua-Jonathan administration, that helped to broker peace and mellow the situation, should become a lasting feature of engagement. However, the government should be proactive in apprehending and prosecuting all recalcitrant and rogue elements, to serve as a deterrent to would-be trouble-makers.

In terms of providing an enabling environment for peace and prosperity to thrive, the government has to be alive to its responsibility of security to life and property across its territory, especially in the Niger Delta. But this will be undermined if the government does not ensure that the incidence of injustice and inequity, that breeds discontent, is properly handled in a timely manner. There must be redress of genuine grievances, before people resort to self-help that often gets expressed violently due to accumulated anger.

Poor regulation, ill-equipped institutions, and non-effective instruments of governance have been identified as contributory to the issues creating sustainability in the Niger Delta. The government should, as a matter of urgency, empower its various arms and agencies with the right equipment to discharge their responsibility. Regulatory departments, such as the department of petroleum resources (DPR), and inspection bodies, such as the National Oil Spill Detection and Regulatory Agency (NOSDRA), should not be made to rely on oil companies in order to discharge their functions.

Perhaps, the key to the expected actions of government is the need for truth and transparency. The government needs to adhere to the ethos of the Nigerian Extractive Industry and Transparency Initiative (NEITI), which requires openness in the execution of public business. But the reality is often far from the ideal, despite advances made in this regard. For example, virtually all past Nigerian governments have made promises to end the Niger Delta crisis, but the situation does not match those promises. The end to oil spills and gas flaring has continued to be a forlorn dream, and the vast areas that have suffered pollution have remained unremediated, despite the years of protest and many broken promises to repair the damage. This is also an occasion where the church can play a mediatory or advocacy role to ensure that parties live up to their responsibilities.

8.5 Recommendation to Business and Industry

The experience of insecurity, disruption to their ordinary business, and a bad public image, should have served to awaken oil companies to the reality that ignoring Niger

Delta's problems will do them more damage and exacerbate corporate and pecuniary costs. Consequently, they need to develop a rapid response to incidents of oil spillage, whether they were accidental or the deliberate activity of so-called saboteurs. The multinational oil companies (MNOCs), and their local contractors, must constantly review and update their production processes to match international standards.

The issue of transparency is also critical in order to build trust with local oil-bearing communities. Just like the government, oil companies need to be transparent with their reporting functions, especially regarding incidents of oil spill. Communities need to be sensitised to know how and when to respond to emergencies, and contingency measures put in place by the polluter to support communities.

The issue of public participation is vital, particularly in decisions that affect them. For example, the process of making an environmental impact assessment is one that lends itself to public participation. Therefore, local people should not only be consulted, but involved throughout the process. Once again, the PCN can play a key role in ensuring that this is the case.

8.6 Recommendation to the Community

Although Niger Delta communities have suffered the impact of environmental degradation, it is important for them to realise that there is no alternative to dialogue in settling disputes. Those who have resorted to violence and sabotage of public infrastructure have done more harm to themselves and the environment. When pipelines are blown up, the oil spilled renders the soil and waters of the Niger Delta unusable.

Communities will do well to be proactive in reporting oil spills and to enable access to such sites. It is imperative that the government and oil companies involve these communities in their reporting framework, as part of the extractive industry's

transparency initiative. Communities should be encouraged, trained, equipped and mobilised to form independent monitoring and security cooperatives, to monitor and secure oil installations within their bounds and to report issues in a timely manner. The remuneration they receive from this contract will ensure that the benefit trickles down to the people, instead of mainly benefitting contractors that have no stake with the impact of any potential damage.

8.7 Suggestion for future research

Nigeria being a multi-religious society with a greater percentage of its population being either Christians or Muslims it will be interesting to know what other religions' views are on the environment. It will particularly be useful to know what Islamic theological thoughts would be especially since Christian scholarship is beginning to make its presence felt in the environmental discourse. Unfortunately Islam in Nigeria has been in the news more for the inhuman activities of Islamist groups such as Boko Haram that have been killing and maiming innocent people in the name of religion. Such bad incidents detract from the benevolent activities of many kind-hearted Muslims. It is this vast majority of good natured Muslims, especially the academics among them, who one calls upon to consider researching, or making contribution on their tradition's environmental views know.

Furthermore, the components of the local holistic ecotheology could become the focus of another doctoral research. For instance, there could be a full-blown study into a political theology for the Niger Delta, or a theology of mineral wealth. This thesis does not pretend to have all the answers. And as the LHE cycle indicates, there are opportunities embedded in it to engage any enquirer who desires to develop it further.

8.8 Conclusion

For the PCN to be relevant in this 21st century it has to eschew every form of narrow-minded understanding of mission, in order to embrace aspects that deal with people's practical challenges. In this case it is the environment. Early Church of Scotland Missionaries to Nigeria did that when they confronted the challenges of their day and changed the fortunes of millions of people for ever. They dealt with ignorance that led to the killing of twins and the stigmatisation of their mothers by providing education when they challenged. They dealt with illiteracy by building the first secondary school in Nigeria, which produced Nigeria's first and only indigenous Governor-General of the colonial era, the late Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. Azikiwe went on to become Nigeria's first native post-independence President. The missionaries confronted the people's health challenges by building hospitals, some of which are still operational today at Uburu in Ebonyi State, at Abiriba in Abia State (now a government general hospital), and at Itigidi in Cross Rivers State.

The PCN can, therefore, not hear the groans of God's creation in the Niger Delta, where the people and the environment are suffering under the weight of oil degradation and injustice. There is no reason why these should not define the present mission thrust of the church. But, will the church take this on, or decide to look the other way?

Appendix One: Questionnaire Survey Results 2009 and 2016

THE SURVEY RESULTS

Linking Faith with Environmental Values: The Case of Presbyterians in Port

Harcourt, Nigeria

Table 0.1: Showing the Pattern of Questionnaire Distribution 2009 vs 2016

Name of Churches in the 2009 Survey	Distributed	Returned	Name of Churches in the 2016 Survey	Distributed	Returned
Anglican Church, Ozuoba	21	13	Rumuomasi PCN	30	25
Chapel of Annunciation (Roman Catholic), University of Port Harcourt	21	17	Mgbuoba PCN	30	20
Chapel of Redemption (Interdenominational), Rivers State University of Science and Technology	21	6	Mary Slessor Memorial PCN	30	26
Cherubim and Seraphim Church	21	13	Woji PCN	40	33
Christ Church Interdenominational	21	6	Diobu PCN	30	23
Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA)	21	11	Bori PCN	30	10
Gateway International Church (Pentecostal)	21	10	Bodo PCN	20	10
Life Gate Power Church (Pentecostal)	21	10	Eliohani PCN	30	20
Presbyterian Church, Rumuomasi Parish	21	7	Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Passover Parish, Port Harcourt	30	10
St John's Catholic Church	21	3	Anglican Church Rumuokwurushi	30	10
			Cherubim and Seraphim, Bori	30	<u>10</u>
TOTAL	<u>210</u>	<u>96</u>	TOTAL	<u>330</u>	<u>197</u>

Table 0.2: Showing the NEP Grand Totals for 2009 vs 2016

#	<i>Questions/Statements</i>	<i>2009 DATA</i>			<i>2016 DATA</i>		
		<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>D</i>
1	We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.	15	21	60	145	16	36
2	Humans have the right to modify the environment to suit their needs.	80	5	11	181	4	12
3	When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.	78	14	4	182	1	14
4	Human ingenuity will ensure that we do NOT make the earth unsustainable.	44	34	18	128	43	26
5	Humans are severely abusing the environment.	89	2	5	167	4	26
6	The earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them	94	2	0	193	2	2
7	Plants and animals have just as much right as humans to exist.	46	16	34	159	10	28
8	Nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrialisation.	43	16	37	22	3	172
9	Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature.	88	6	2	175	7	15
10	2016: <i>The so-called 'ecological crisis' facing the Niger Delta has been greatly exaggerated</i> 2009: The so-called 'ecological crisis' facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.	37	19	40	12	14	171
11	The earth is like a spaceship with very limited resources.	15	18	63	40	22	135
12	Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature.	88	4	4	177	0	20
13	The balance of nature is very easily upset.	51	29	16	164	21	12
14	Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it.	66	20	10	194	2	1
15	If things continue on their present course we will be soon facing an ecological catastrophe.	74	15	7	176	20	1

Table 0.3: Showing NEP Results for PCN vs Other Churches

Sections	All PCN Churches X			Other (Non-PCN) Churches Y			TOTAL Number of Questionnaire Returned
	A	U	D	A	U	D	
1	128	12	27	17	4	9	197
2	156	3	8	23	2	5	197
3	157	1	9	25	0	5	197
4	111	34	22	17	8	5	197
5	156	6	5	26	2	2	197
6	165	0	2	28	2	0	197
7	140	7	20	19	3	8	197
8	18	10	140	4	3	23	197
9	151	4	12	24	2	4	197
10	9	11	147	3	3	24	197
11	34	16	117	6	5	19	197
12	167	0	0	10	0	20	197
13	139	18	10	25	3	2	197
14	165	1	1	29	1	0	197
15	152	14	1	24	6	0	197

Table 0.4: Showing Part 2 of the 2016 Survey expressing theological and missional values - PCN vs Others

<i>Responses to the 2016 Survey expressing theological and missional values</i>	PCN			OTHERS		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
<i>TM1. Environmental issues are integral to (a component of) the Christian faith</i>	128	31	8	20	8	2
<i>TM2. Environmental issues are incidental to (an appendage of) Christian faith.</i>	113	40	14	17	9	4
<i>TM3. Environmental issues are important (vital) to the Christian faith</i>	108	30	29	12	13	5
<i>TM4. Environmental issues are irrelevant (inconsequential) to the Christian faith.</i>	49	25	93	13	8	9
<i>TM5. Environmental issues are insidious (harmful) to the Christian faith.</i>	99	31	37	16	3	11
<i>TM6. The death of Jesus was to reconcile <u>only humans</u> to God</i>	139	21	7	26	3	1
<i>TM7. The death of Jesus was to reconcile <u>all creation</u> to God</i>	167	0	0	26	2	2
<i>TM8. Human beings were created in God's image, therefore, they are unique from every other creation.</i>	167	0	0	22	0	8
<i>TM9. The mission of the Church is primarily the salvation of human souls, environmental issues are a distraction</i>	102	40	25	16	8	6
<i>TM10. Integral mission ministers to the whole facet of creation</i>	139	23	5	13	13	4
<i>TM11. Your Church observes an annual (special) day for the environment, as it does for Fathers, Mothers, Youths, and so on.</i>	0	60	107	2	13	15
<i>TM12. Your denomination provides teaching resources to support your care for the environment</i>	76	39	52	14	6	10
<i>TM13. Your congregation runs environmentally focused public awareness projects in your community.</i>	10	34	123	3	10	17
<i>TM14. The bible contains adequate resources to form the basis for environmental action by the Church</i>	152	15	0	26	3	1
<i>TM15. Wisdom from local cultures can be a resources for the Church's environmental action</i>	112	30	25	13	9	8

Table 0.5 Results of the 2016 Survey Showing Biblical Teaching/Views - PCN vs Others

<i>Responses to the 2016 extra-NEP Survey</i>	PCN			OTHERS		
<i>Biblical Teaching/Views</i>	A	U	D	A	U	D
BT1. God told Christians to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ and ‘to have dominion over it’. Therefore the earth and creation are there for our use and enjoyment. (Genesis 1:28)	167	0	0	30	0	0
BT2. The book of Revelation says that the present world will come to an end. Therefore, there is no purpose in trying to reverse an ‘ecological crisis’- it is all part of God’s plan. (Revelation 21:1)	60	36	71	7	6	17
BT3. Christians believe that the whole creation is made by and belongs to God. Therefore we should value creation. (Psalm 24:1)	166	1	0	29	1	0
BT4. The incarnation of God through his Son, Jesus Christ, shows us that he regards his entire creation as important. (Colossians 1:15-16)	167	0	0	30	0	0
BT5. Christians are called to be stewards of God’s earth and all it contains. Stewardship implies a commitment of care to all creation. (Genesis 2: 18-19)	149	14	4	23	5	2
BT6. We will only understand the role that humanity has in God’s plan when we take responsibility for the environment, as the creation of the earth is the primary disclosure of God. (Hebrews 1:3)	144	14	9	17	7	6

<p>BT7. The new earth will emerge from the old; therefore it is our duty to preserve God's creation. (Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 66:22)</p>	157	6	4	20	6	4
<p>BT8. The book of Revelation says God will make a brand new earth and heaven; nevertheless it is our responsibility to care for the present world (Rev 21:1-2)</p>	153	12	2	21	6	3

Appendix Two: Interview Results From 2009 Fieldwork

TAXONOMY OF THE RESPONSES OF PRESBYTERIANS TO NIGER DELTA'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS/ISSUES

S/No	Respondent	Environmental Problems	Effects	Cause	Action Taken/Needed	Church Action	Church Challenges	
A1	Elder Mrs Ada Agwu (Ade Ango)	Bad Roads		Poor quality construction: 'And I think the roads also contribute to the environment first of all people are paid to work on the road and then they do a bad job and within a few months a good road breaks down and it's terrible' Q7			1. Lack of budget and funding	
		Theology: 'We should make the place habitable and comfortable we know it's a temporary stay but we should do our best.' Q1	Flooding				GA created awareness//Local PCN responded raising money and relief	2. Lack of general awareness of what the national/local church agenda is on the environment
			Indiscriminate Housing [Q4]	Obstructing water channels and flooding [Q5]	Poor government regulation [Q6]			
			Oil Pollution	Fertility of soil affected//fishes (aquatic life) destroyed//	Shell and other Oil companies			
		Poor sanitation				'...where I live, I have been trying to ask the people to come together so that we do things together but they are not interested.'	Q12	

	<p>“cleanliness is next to Godliness” Q2</p>	<p>‘Pure water’ litters</p>	<p>‘the menace of “pure water sachets” dropped anywhere’ Q11</p>	<p>Public: ‘People are beginning to realize that it is necessary to keep their surrounding clean. Because I am intrigued by the saying that ‘cleanliness is next to Godliness’, I just feel that every believer should realize it makes the difference living in a clean surrounding. So in the estate where we lived people are making efforts to ensure that the place is clean. But I must add that it is not as thorough as what we would have expected. For example the people are fond of drinking water and dropping the bottle there especially “pure water” sachets. So it’s still not perfect’. Q3</p>	<p>Awareness//Enacting Law</p>	<p>Personal Suasion as a Christian: ‘when we were trying to get children to attend the school we should also have made sure that the market places were clean I don’t think we attempted that’ [Q9]</p>	<p>Gov’t priorities: ‘The much they are doing is probably to create awareness. In the case of flooding the G.A. encouraged branches to do something about it and that is making an impact’ Q8</p> <p>‘when you think of the God you worship, you imagine everything around him must be very clean and then if you believe in him you would also want to keep up with a clean environment’ Q10</p>
<p>A2</p>	<p>Iniobong Umana (India Ume)</p>	<p>Noise Roads</p>	<p>‘...people think the louder you shout the better the impact. We are too noisy’ [Q13] Tortured driving</p>	<p>‘the job that has been done is not very good even the portions that are good are now becoming bad in less than two</p>			

years after these sections were completed. So you wouldn't say it is good job, a good job is supposed to stand a test of time' [Q1].

Lack of Facilities

Social 'One would have said it is transforming, but I will say it is degenerating, because any transformation should have a meaning to the individuals who are living there. There should be social facilities; good roads, water, Electricity and all of that makes life worth living, but I will say that the people who live here are begging for these facilities. We are transforming and at the same time are regressing, so you wouldn't say we are leading anywhere. It is like walking in a circle without knowing you are' [Q2].

Corruption and thievery

New policies

gov't

church by problems
swallowed society's

'A functional religion should lead us to his [God's] creation, his reign and everything. When that is done perhaps the word of God would have impacted on the listener. Now people only come to the house of God just to be momentarily relieved of the problems that they face. And once they get out of the church they face problems that will toss them back to where they were. And so the word loses value as soon as they come out of the

Theology: 'I don't think that the earth will be destroyed. Because somewhere in the Bible we were told that

Lack of Planning

Native land sale

'The environment is a living thing so to speak. If you have altered it you should alter it for a purpose. But the altering

'when we take the first sentence of the bible about [the creation of] Heaven and Earth, you can see order there, and he [God] went on to put those

church. And so people have to take the word seriously, in order to see the transformation that will come to their lives, and to the environment. And that is where you will now have an organic relationship between that which is truthful and that which has been translated into form that gives us happiness. As they say [in Proverbs 23:7, KJV], 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he' [Q7]

The church is a stake holder...but they have been dawdling [Q5]

God promised that the earth won't be destroyed. I see the earth as an infinite object, it is just infinite. It is only the activities of men that are finite that come to an end and then a new life begins. I am hoping that when man resurrects to see an earth that has been purified then he will thank God for those who used his word to create a name. But it should be in our hearts and mind to build on that which God handed to us.' [Q6]

Waste Management

can end up in things...for the six disordering and days of creation, that disordering and he rested and ends you in a blessed what he had mess' [Q3]. created and handed over to man to tend. And so if we have come at this time we are all tenders of that earth that was beautifully created for us.' [Q4]

'What have we done? We have destroyed it by our action. But God has renewed the earth, the earth is still there because his

'Yes we have to spend money, development just doesn't happen, it comes as a result of needs that arise in the

					judgment come.' [Q8]	will	life of people and financing it is the major aspect of development' [Q9]
		Flooding Oil Pollution			Sabotage//system failure//mass impunity in oil sector//Poverty//unemployment //lack of education//uncultured mind//Public		2. Lack of Functional religion 3. Myopia 4. Lack of Capacity
A3	Sunday Peter (Sabo Panti)	Underdevelopment [Q1] Poor housing Unemployment Insecurity [Q2]	He/others ran away from PHC		Cults//hooligans, e.g. ELEGEM, DEGBAM, MEND: 'it was between the Dee Gbam Boys and the Elegem Face Boys, while in old Port Harcourt town where MSMPCN is situated it was between the Greenland and Iceland' [Q3]		
B4	Chima Jacob (Chike Job) Church Site: 'you want the quietness that you require a sanctuary	Oil politics Population Chieftaincy crisis Cultism	People trooping in	Lawlessness//Broken down community leadership//Restive Youth [Q2]	'I call it a free zone because it doesn't have any community leader. It seems everyone from every nook and cranny of Nigeria can reside here freely without being under any community law.' Q2		

should have, but in this Diobu region where the church is located we don't have that' Q1

B5

Ugo Nnaochie (Ugochi Nnam): believes 'cleanliness is next to godliness' [Q1]

Uncleanness	Lawlessness//Lack of community cohesion	Dirty environment//		
Neglect/Underdevelopment	Gov't neglect [Q3]//selfishness of people in power	Lawlessness//impunity//		
Oil pollution	Destroys land, water, air [Q4]//Unemployment [Q5]// Bunkering [Q6]//Compromised community leaders	Cultism//anti-social behaviour//carelessness of oil workers//Bribery and corruption//Lack of regulation		
Congestion Air pollution	Dirty env.// Respiratory issues	Dense Population [Q4] Gen sets due to lack of power//		
Waste Management		Indiscriminate disposal//rowdy markets	Gov't provided designated spots and vehicles//	Health Week//Education// Lived example of tidying church compound Ignorant of any GA program//Individual Christians to live by example
Oil Pollution	Destroyed farms, killed people	Criminal Vandalised equipment//protest action//of		
Corruption Insecurity	Gun battles//crimes//cultism//Fear//molestations//	Niger crisis//cults//Militants: TEKE & SEKEBO	Gov't drafted in soldiers to bring calm	
Bad Roads		Poor construction: 'It is affecting the environment because if you take a look at Mile 3 for example, the market has encroached into the main		

road. This Bishop Okoye [street] was built year before last but if you enter there it doesn't look as if it was built, the road is spoilt because of the market people that were there. If you go to Ikwerre road, the road that leads to UST as well where we have people that are selling building materials, the road is so clustered, not only clustered it is also littered with dirt thereby causing traffic on that road all the time. If you enter into Mile 3, this Bishop Okoye [street], it is not motorable, cars cannot pass through because of the tightness of the road' Q2

Borderless Markets

Encroach on roads//litters//traffic jam//accidents [Q3]

Smelly area

lawlessness

Anti-social behaviour via **littering** and urinating anywhere//lack of gov't **monitoring**//entrenched **bad habits**//**Adam and Eve's** disobedience and sin

Gov't has provided facilities, Env. Agency//Gov't action needs long-term sustenance//Task Force needed

Willingness of members to give financial support//Applying faith to overcome// 'We don't have such but what we normally do is when the government is having their own environmental day, the minister will also call us to join the government to

No Env Week in Church//Training Needed// needs teaching on Presbyterianism//Lack of awareness PCN action and ethos//Wants GA action brought local//Funding// Challenge of networking with local people

B6

Chinyere Uke (Chiamaka Ukie): 'In Genesis when God created the earth, he gave us order through Adam and Eve concerning the environment we have talked about, saying that the environment is meant to be

comfortable,
 God made it for
 them to stay and
 it became an
 environment for
 them to stay, if
 not for they
 sinned and
 disorganized it.’
 [Q1]

clean the church
 environment’. [Q2]

**EDUCATION
 & THEOLOGY**

The church has not come to teach us all those things, even sometimes they General Assembly can make it an annual activity and come and teach us about Presbyterianism, in as much as some of us are born into Presbyterian families, we don’t know the orders of the church, some are Sunday medicines that even know anything concerning the church they are attending. It will be good to introduce such activities, even if not generally we can do it in our local congregation. If such things are introduced some of those that comes once in a while will also be able to know what the church they are attending is all about. For e.g. some of the questions you asked me that I don’t know maybe I have been operating locally or my works will not allow me to go to the synods, GA when such is conducted there, but if they bring it to the local church I will benefit from it [Q3].

Air pollution
 Poor drainage
 Waste

Flooding//bad odours

Burnt tyres
 Poor drainage systems
 Refuse//bad habits
 [Q3]//urinating

B7

**Hilary Turkpo
 Ogbonnaya
 (Henry Ogbo)**
 “I don’t think
 that poverty is
 the cause why
 people don’t
 take care of
 their
 environment. Is
 just the habit in
 us” [p35] Q1.
 ‘Yes it was, like
 that Small River
 at Bishop
 Okoye Street,
 like I said
 earlier it is

Over-population [Q3]

Pressure on ecosystem (messing
 local river with human and
 domestic wastes) [Q4]

Lack of support
 from GA to local
 church or from
 bigger parishes
 [Q5]//depleting
 membership due

population of people that has made that river to be in a mess. Everybody now connects their pit to the gutter which when rain comes takes it down to the river, but before it was not so' (p37) Q2

to terrain and rent [Q6]

Flooding [Q7]

Bad/shallow drainage//Poor contractors//rainfall

Insecurity: 'they were able to initiate one of my sons to the occult and we knew about this just last year when one of them were arrested by the police that he confessed that he initiated my son. ' [Q8]

Robbery//killings//lured youth into gangs etc. jobless

Militants and bad boys//occult [Q10]

Gov't soldiers sent Prayers [Q11]

Fear of Reprisals [Q12]

Oil Pollution [Q9]

Affected drinking water, fisheries, farmlands//unemployment//poverty [Q13]

Individuals//Bad lifestyle and habits//Unemployment//lack of CSR//Gov't irresponsibility//bad governance [Q16]

Close monitoring needed//Appealing to Conscience of officials//

He wants Christians to be involved in politics/leadership

Bad Governance [Q14]

Non-payment of salaries & pensions//corruption of officials// Compromise of officials//teachers selling free school materials

Gov't

'Corruption is the main problem we are facing in Nigeria...how

General Corruption [Q15]

C8	<p>can they tackle corruption when it starts from them, how will they have the face and conscience to tell others to stop' [p36] [Q15]</p> <p>Margaret Iben Obuma (WG) – <i>(Marge Oba)</i> 'Environment is a place where people live, dominated by people from different culture'</p>	Flooding				Church sand-filled the road and constructed raised pedestrian platform [Q1]	She showed disinterest in the things around her
C9	<p>Elder Onoh O. Onoh (MCA) – <i>Omo Omoba</i> "Because too the cleaning of the environment fetches money for the community, so some boys who need money may just go and do that and</p>	Oil Spill	Glazy oily water [Q23]	<p>Indiscriminate disposal/'pure water' sachets/ /taxis sky-tipping/ <u>"Production procedure, wear and tear by age, some of them are deliberate...man made..., and...oil theft. Those who do such things [oil theft] create their own kind of problem...when they finish draining...some will spill."</u> [Q2]</p>	The PCN has raised communiques/ /been strong on issues related to HIV/AIDS, women empowerment, education, but not environment		Too slow to respond, rather reactive//Inadequate capacity in trained manpower, office, equipment, resource materials, funds, experience and exposure

perforate it [break into the pipeline]. Oil bunkering creates that too [i.e., oil spill through illegal tapping of crude].” P113 [Q1]

LOCAL WISDOM: ‘*ebe onye bi ka O na wachi*’, that is ‘where you live is where you protect’. So it becomes our responsibility to protect our environment, because if we don’t protect our environment we won’t do well.” P121 [Q3] ‘*Charity begins at home*’, and we normally say ‘*cleanliness is next to godliness*’ p121 [Q4]

Waste Management

‘*But tell me that man whose income is low, can he afford to spend money to buy that waterproof bag? I am not even talking about differentiating [sorting] the different kinds of garbage, whether biodegradable, glass, wooden materials etc... Even if they understand they will ask, ‘why should I spend my money for that? Poverty is a key issue, a man is trying to survive and you are telling him to do this and that. [Q16]*

Inconsistent regulation and monitoring//Ignorance//Education needed: ‘That is why I was trying to emphasise **educating the people**. It could mean **starting from schools**. In that case the child will tell you ‘That’s not what our teacher said...’ But the average government school do they teach such things? No. But it should be in the curriculum. I know we used to have hygiene and all of that in times back, it should be there. The children should grow up with that kind of attitude and it becomes a part of them.’ Q19

Lack of maintenance of culture//Create proper dump & recycling sites; ‘So we still **need a lot of education and campaign that will cost a lot of money**. Gov’t should **employ people to implement** what they have said. All of this is inside the city, outside the city anything goes... We require a lot of education. It has to be consistent and persistent. In those days there used to be

“we have championed more peaceful way of channelling our grievances, although some of our neighbours wanted us to go and fight” p121 [Q5]

“**Leviticus** is strong on **hygiene...when Jesus fed the 5000** there were **twelve baskets left. He ensured that they collected them back, so the environment was not littered. That idea of picking them up is for me a sign that the environment should be cared for and that waste should not be encouraged.**” P120 [Q6]

'This Aba Road, they always de-silt it once or twice a year, but when they finish they leave it by the roadside, the next rain washes the whole thing back into the drainage system again.' P113 [Q7]

Flooding

'There are some houses you see you know someone had to pay off some other person in order to get access, and so it is a major concern here. And now we have a water [flooding] problem here. All the water that comes in from the road drains at the back of this building. They [other land owners] have blocked the entire back area. This place is a basin, which starts at the back and continues to the new waterway they have built. But they have covered it all with buildings and water has to find its level. Each time we open a hole [to drain the water] they will block it. Our fence has fallen [collapsed] many times, so we had to use iron rod to cast it [with concrete]. That is why the fence is standing because we had to redo the entire fence from end to

Drains blocked by Silt & polythene litters//Ignorance//rainfall//Hotel Novotel

sanitary workers. Today they are just waiting for salaries to be paid. If the gov't puts the same effort it has put into traffic control to waste management there will be much difference.'

[Q17]

Gov't created a channel along Stadium Road area//Stronger regulation

Church sand-filled the road//constructed raised pedestrian platform//raised funds and relief//free water supply to neighbours//Court suit//peaceful advocacy

PCN & other Churches not been proactive, but reactive *

	Polythene bags	end.’ Q8 flooding	Use of non-biodegradable materials	
<p>Degradable vs non-degradable: ‘Management of dirt, household trash, both solid and non-solid is a big problem. And this problem is compounded by the polypropylene products. It’s a big challenge. When we were growing up you didn’t have this polyethylene problem, if you buy anything in the market it was wrapped with paper which is biodegradable... In fact, they were wrapped in leaves, then they upgraded to kom-kom [metal tins], now they use other [non-degradable] things. Now everything is cellophane, and the management of cellophane is a big nuisance. Most of the water [flooding] problem we have in this town is because all the sewers and drainages are blocked by cellophane, and they create other problems. I mean just going out there you see the overhead bridge with proper drainage, but the drainage is filled with silt.’ Q18</p>				
	Noise	Hearing problems	Loudspeakers by canvassers including churches, mosques, roadside vendors, car horns and motor park [Q22]	*Need for ‘consistent and persistent’ education, campaign, [Q9]
	Poor Town Planning	Unapproved housing and business centres (mechanic workshops), blocked drains and impunity	Poor regulation and governance, Non-implementation of plans, Land Decree, Greed of landowners	Stronger Regulation needed: ‘Diobu and the original town are the only places that are planned. All the streets and layouts are there. A bit of the original GRA, when I mean GRA, I mean Old GRA, and GRA phases 1, 2, and a bit of 3. <u>The rest of PHC are not planned.</u> They just built houses here and there. It is not because they don’t have a

Poor Housing	<p>‘because of the cost of houses people now live in what is called wooden estates [that is, people subletting their free space for temporary log-cabin structures]. Part of the problem it creates is that it accommodates a lot of people, all these mechanics [and so on]. It also accommodates thieves. That is why the Governor destroyed that waterside around Diobu Mile One area. In fact it became a big court case. All these miscreants would find their way to such places because of cheap housing. You see them in GRA, anywhere you go you see them. Generally it is often people from the same area, because they have to trust themselves. It is not that it is cheap, there is an amount you pay monthly just to occupy that space.’ Q15</p>	<p>Value of land due to scarcity of dry land, so people rent space for unapproved structures.</p> <p>‘Waste disposal vehicles are capital intensive but the other problem we have is the lack of a maintenance culture. When the vehicles break down there are no parts to repair them’ [Q21]</p>	<p>plan, but because we cannot implement the plan, we can’t enforce the plan.’ [Q14]</p> <p>Gov’t destroyed some of those places, e.g. Mile 1 Waterside</p>
Insecurity Kidnapping	<p>and General insecurity & Internally Displaced People</p>	<p>Criminal gangs and militants//Presence of oil (high net-worth) people</p>	<p>Governor Amaechi has brought security (p117)</p> <p>Church provides 70%-80% of the Security charges in the area till date. P117:_____“some Presbyterians either through the demands of their</p> <p>P117 “I am not aware of any official role played by the church at any level – parish, presbytery, Synod or the GA</p>

work or their [general
personal assembly] in
knowledge or terms of
understanding are maintaining the
involved in one environment and
way or the other. all the issues that
For instance if you come from
work in the oil them.” [Q11].
industry and your P118: We can
work has to do with look for
community **members and**
relations they have **ministers who**
to be involved in **have strong**
solving these **inclination**
environmental towards certain
issues. In that sense areas of service
it is **work-related,** such as
not church-related environmental
or faith-related. issues, health-
Some of them who related matters,
have deeper peculiar social
convictions may be problems and
more passionate cultural issues.
about their work They will do
because of their studies and
personal faith and comparative
the knowledge that analysis of
they have, but as different nations
a church I am not and what
aware that we have churches have
one.” [Q10] done and come
up with what we
can do and then
we give them the
impetus to
pursue it.’ [Q12]

Population Increase

Increase population and pressure on amenities

ND crisis and Boko Haram religious crisis in the North

POPULATION: Yes. Let me give you an observation. I have lived in this city for about 20years, the number of vehicles now have is much more than what we had before. Two things have happened to create this problem. People [IDPs] kept moving from the country during the height of that ND crisis to quieter areas such as PH. And when it [the crisis] came to PH they moved again to safer lands. The upheaval started with kidnapping oil[industry]-related people, then **kidnapping now became a general business.** All the big [notable] people had to leave town. That is why all those big people who must stay now had a retinue of vehicles around them with security people. In fact, it got to a point when all the white people moved to Lagos. They would fly them to the airport, take a chopper to the rig, and when they finish what they are doing there they fly them back the same way back to Lagos. It was expensive. They spent a lot of money on security, so the town looked drained.

Now, when the issue [insecurity] started happening in the North [of Nigeria], that is religious-related issues and all that, people started running down South. And Port Harcourt is a very serious economic base. So Port Harcourt started filling again. That is what you are seeing now. With all these Boko Haram issues and all that, people are now coming down here – because when they are moving to the East they just end up in the South-South – that is where the oil companies are.

The third issue is that many of the oil companies have moved their headquarters to Port Harcourt. The NLNG for instance, you know they built a new headquarters right here [Port Harcourt]. They have moved from Lagos to this place. These things I believe have affected the dynamics of population in this area. That is what I think is happening. Also, with government’s activity [security wise] there has been some quiet right now, in terms of the kidnapping been highly reduced. **[Q20]**

Poverty

Prioritising survival first

The degradation//Unemployment

NOVOTEL EXPERIENCE: ‘We have championed moves to improve our environment. Novotel for instance, all their wastes pass through our community and they don’t care a damn. So we instituted a suit against them in court. But our neighbours in the community were not forthcoming. Even if we provide the money we need people to go and stand. So after a point the thing [case] was struck off for want of evidence.

It will be interesting for you to know that recently there was a fire outbreak in one of the neighbouring compounds as you approach the church. The Novotel had a fire incident in their compound, and the fire followed waste diesel on top of the drainage line towards our church. What saved us was that the gutter was filled [with flood water], so the fire could not cross the top of the culvert. It stopped at that shop [pointing] and burnt the shop.

Fire trucks came, about four or five of them, but they could not gain entrance into the place. They had to extend their hose to stop the fire from spreading. Our minister even started packing his books, and they had to carry their children out of the place. So it was Novotel that repaired those houses that were destroyed. So, we have championed more peaceful way of championing our grievances, although some of our neighbours wanted us to go and fight, we said, No. Of course, NOVOTEL surrounded themselves with heavily armed policemen and security, so no one could come close. People lost a lot of things. Well that’s what we’ve done as a church.’ **[Q13]**

C10 Dr Chinyere Nkele (MCA) – Oil (prompted) *Chika Nkire*

Pollution ‘It is in the hinterland, in Ogoni and other places, but not felt much in PHC.’ [Q1] He thinks the petrochemical industry is well contained. ‘Depending on who you speak to the story of causes vary between oil companies, the gov’t and the community’ p158 [Q2]

Gov’t complacency

Church should:
“If you plough some of the millions churches are spending on big structures to show example of care for the environment

Waste

Dirty environment

Uncarted refuse: "People dump their waste anywhere and the carting away is not regular. In some places people don't move the waste as they do in places close to the gov't house." P158 [Q4]

THEOLOGY:
"God gave man the environment as a legacy to support him and give him all he needs. We depend on the environment, and our survival depends on it. As they say 'do not be too heavenly minded that you become earthly useless'. God meant

they are likely to gain gov't attention and to move the government to wake up themselves. So we should start by taking ownership of our environment.

But it will come back to what your members will say when you spend such monies on the environment and not their personal issues." P159 [Q3]

Saving souls as primary calling of the church: "Yes, I don't think the church's is to go about and clean up everybody's mess, but they have a responsibility to clean up their own mess at least. And if every church did

				for us to enjoy hear (on earth) and also in heaven.” P158 [Q5]	that, if every human being did that there won't be any problems.” P158 [Q6]
Increase in Vehicles	Increased Traffic and air pollution and noise				
Poverty	<p>“With poverty goes shabbiness, poor hygiene, crime, etc.” p158 [Q6]</p> <p>“Our people are so immersed into subsistence living that they don't concern themselves with taking care of the environment.” P159 [Q7]</p>	<p>“No, it is a problem of attitude and the gov't provision of alternatives. Where there is none people will resort to what they find. If there are no bins people will generally litter the place.” P159 [Q8]</p>	<p>Education: “People are not concerned about the ozone layer because they do not know what it is.” P159 [Q9]</p>	<p>The church has not caught on yet. If there is flooding then they will react, not that they plan ahead. [Q13]</p>	<p>Creation Story: “God gave us the earth and the resources to sustain us and for us to take care of it. He also gave us a manual, the bible to show us how to take care of it.” P159 [Q10]</p>
Insecurity Flooding		Militancy		<p>Sand-filling and pedestrian platform: “what we are doing here is only so that people can come here to worship. But it is all about self-preservation, not necessarily altruistic. But the benefit to neighbours is a fall-out.” P158 [Q11]</p>	<p>“There are no resource materials for this. No special programs, talk or enlightenment about the env. The church has not caught on yet. If there is flooding then they will react, not that they</p>

C11

Affiong Udo Insecurity
(Youth) –
Annette Udoma

Theft, harassment, brother was shot
and car snatched//she was caught in
crossfire//

Militants,
criminals//Dissatisfaction with
Gov't response to ND//

Gov't placed
curfew and
demolished
criminal hide-
outs

plan ahead. The resources of the church is such that when we are winning souls and all that there is nothing left to talk about caring for the environment.

The question is, are they doing enough even for their own surroundings?" p159 [Q12]

EXPERIENCE OF INSECURITY: "In one of those days, they were shooting, snatching cars from people and my brother was shot, but he didn't die. It happened that we came to church that day as we came today, on our way back; he went out with a company car so they shot him and collected the car. That period it got to a point that we had to declare curfew. At times you will be in the office or school or wherever, the next thing you will hear is gunshots and all that everywhere. In one occasion I was at D-Line, they started shooting all of a sudden and people were running helter-skelter, I was there and I had to run without looking back. It was really terrible in the year 2007." P17 [Q1]

Neglect: "I think they felt that most of the money made in Nigeria come from Niger Delta, and this money were used outside Niger Delta in developing other places and neglected the Niger Delta." P18 Q2

Oil Pollution

Fuels dissatisfaction of locals/
"From the little I know, the Niger Delta people said they were not taken care of by the government and the companies around. So they were like taking a kind of revenge or stepping out so that they can be seen, noticed and taken care of."

P18 Q3

farmlands

			Bad Roads Unemployment		‘And they also mentioned that these oil companies don’t give tem job opportunities even though many of them are not qualified/educated, but they felt they should have upper hand’ Q4	
			Poor Drainage Waste			Indiscriminate disposal by public// The government has opened up a channel, we should be able to respect and obey the law by keeping and dumping refuse properly. The government have really tried anyway...but the problem is that how many people faithfully and sincerely used it [Q5].
C12	Mrs Ugo E. Ogbonnaya (WG) – Uga Ogbo		Social Injustice/Inequity			Youth & community discontentment: No electricity & good roads
			Insecurity	Kidnapping		Lack of compensation//Discontented youth//Criminal gangs
			Oil spillage	Destroyed farms		Oil spillage from company facilities Lack of gov’t intervention
			Waste Blocked drainage	Blocks drains flooding		Public is responsible

C13

<p>Eye Obasi (MCA) – <i>Ere Oba</i></p>	<p>Bad roads Flooding Population Waste disposal</p>	<p>Inundating neighbourhoods Overstretched amenities</p>	<p>Past Gov't irresponsibility Poor planning//building on drainage lines System failure: 'Disposal not properly done'[Q1]</p>	<p>Gov't is now building roads and other infrastructure Church youth constructed wooden pedestrian walkway//Church organised skills acquisition for the youth Gov't is engaging road sweepers</p>	<p>He is disappointed in the people and lifestyle he has experienced in PHC</p>
<p>PARISH EXPERIENCE: Some of the water from the gutter, before we sand-filled this estate, it used to overflow and enter into the church compound. I remember there was a Sunday that we could not worship because the</p>	<p>Bad roads Flooding [Q2]</p>	<p>Neighbourhoods are flooded including the church//business are frustrated</p>	<p>Drains are blocked with waste//ND topography as riverine area</p>	<p>[Q3]Church has created wooden walkway [and] unblocked drains//reclaimed land//GA has helped the parish// Consulting sanitation authority//</p>	<p>As for now we have been able to overcome the challenges in that, the flooding we have now is not as it used to be. But still at the back of the church is actually what is saving us because there is a land that we have not touched. This</p>

church was over flooded. So there was no way to worship due to the level of water and no vehicle entered this compound. The children that came in that day, we had to carry them on the shoulders for them not to drown due to the level of water. [Q4]

place is still swampy, so some excess water is going there and if we try to cover that place, it is like we have sacrificed that land. If we try to cover that place that means there will be a fresh problem.

Corruption [Q5]

Gov't agents extorting money from people in the name of environmental sanitation

Oil pollution [Q6]

Affecting farms in the Ogoni area//fire outbreaks

Management of oil facilities//pipeline vandalism//protest action Militants [Q8]

Gov't not been able to provide lasting solution

Insecurity [Q7]

Kidnapping

Gov't amnesty with momentary calm. ***"It is controversial when people are not working you are paying them."*** [Q8]

Church has preached and dissuaded members from involvement [Int.C13/2012/Q9]

PCN has not done much in engaging the public and community

D14

Miss Nene Cheetham-West (Youth) – ***Nne Weta***

Education

Illiteracy on the part of the public

Cost of fees//not enough schools

Environment:

Flooding

The church compound has suffered

Blocked gutters

Gov't has She has not noticed

D15	surrounding, where we stay		flooding		vehicles doing a weekly collection of waste	any response	church	
	Igbo: Gburugburu anyi	Oil Pollution?						She showed ignorance
	Faith Ogbonnaya (WG) – Felicia Ogbo	N. Insecurity and Fear	Fear//Kidnaps//killings	Inter-communal fighting ‘What caused the fight was land. They [Okrika and Eleme] each claimed ownership of the land where the refinery is located. The Okrika people don’t have much land, their area is surrounded by water. So that refinery site is the only area where they have dry ground. The crisis is still going on even now. They kidnap people who go to farm and kill them in the bush. The present Governor has been making efforts to bring peace and has even promised to give compensation to both communities for the refinery land. That is why the fight has stopped.’ Q1	Gov’t brokered peace//paid compensation/ /Court and Rule of Law	Church prayer and grace of God helped calm the situation		
		Oil pollution	Air pollution from refinery//poor human health/ /roofs affected/ /farmlands poisoned	Eleme Refinery & Petro-chemical gas flares/emission				
	Flooding	Impassable roads by vehicles and pedestrians/ /flooded homes	Rain/ /refuse blocked drainage/ /building of drainage lines/ /			Unblock drainages/ /raise relief/ /evacuated flood victims/ /give education and	Church compound flooded/ /Church members suffered	

<p><u>Proverb:</u> ‘Ana esi n’ulo ama mma tupu aputa na ama’. [Q3] <i>Charity begins at home</i></p>	<p>Waste: People are now making efforts flooding</p>	<p>[Q8] Indiscriminate dumping/ /poor construction work/ /</p>	<p>Gov’t has provided vehicles and designated days/ /Gov’t is now enforcing penalties of jail and fines</p>	<p>advice to victims/ flooding in their homes</p> <p>Discuss environmental issues in church/ /Teachings on how to handle the environment/</p>
	<p>Poor sanitation</p>	<p>No proper toilets, “That was a welcome development as people used to cast their rubbish anyhow. Some of them in Eleme do not even have toilet, they just cast their human waste anywhere.” Q2</p>		
	<p>Poor housing</p> <p>Tenants suffer/ /low standard of living</p>	<p>Poor planning and regulation</p>	<p>Landlords need to update facilities</p>	<p>Members and residents live in very poor sanitary conditions under insensitive landlords</p>

POOR HOUSING (ACID RAIN DAMAGE): “It is actually the tenants who suffer the problem not the landlord – some of them do not live here, some live in PHC, others in Abuja. All they know is for you to go and pay their money in the bank they do not know what you are passing through. Some of them do not even use the money paid them by the gov’t in compensation for their damaged roofs [due to acid rain] for the purpose it is meant. Even our own landlord I have pleaded with him to come and repair our kitchen to no avail. He tells us if you do not like it you should pack and leave. But to pack [general laughter] is another problem, to find a place where you will have peace, and that armed robbers will not trouble you. So we just manage it anyhow. Of course they believe that anyhow the house is, people will collect it.” [Q4]

<p>Noise [Q5]</p>		<p>Electric Generators/ /loud music/ /people shouting</p>	<p>Gov’t needs to match words with action</p>
<p>Air pollution [Q6]</p>		<p>Refinery/ /Electric Generators/ /</p>	
<p>Poor planning [Q7]</p>	<p>Indiscriminate urbanisation</p>	<p>Lack of enforcement of clear guidelines</p>	

D16	Mr Ikechukwu Oji (Youth) – <i>Ikere Ojiako</i>	Flooding		Rainfall: ‘	Churches are working within their environment	Limited resources//
		No Electric power	Discomfort: ‘If there is light security will be very easy. But without light those evil people will find it easy to operate. Also when you close [work] for the day and you get home without light you will not feel comfortable. It also affects the quality of life.’ Q5			
	Proverb: ‘A n’esi n’ulo ama mma tupu aputa n’ezi’ [Q1]	Insecurity Waste	Exposed human waste// No toilets/ /unsanitary habits/ /indiscriminate disposal of domestic waste	‘The other problem is that of refuse. Although the government has provided some vehicle to carry it the people in the market have their centre where they gather it. But the main problem is that people still throw things anyhow along the way, even things like banana peelings because they do not have anywhere to dispose of it. This makes the environment appear unkempt. When it rains for example all these rubbish, including human faeces, get pushed into the Church compound by flood water. Some of these people have no toilet at home, so they defecate into waterproof bags and dump it into the gutter.’ Q2	Lived example of gathering their own church wastes and negotiated with ‘removal’ truck/ /WG cleans church every Sunday morning	IDEALS: “‘cleanliness is next to godliness’. Environment matters in our relationship with God. God doesn’t visit one in a dirty environment. Just like during church service one cannot stay in a dirty environment and be worshipping God. There would be a proper or thorough clean-up, as if the Governor or rather God is

coming.
 Presently on a Sunday morning the women will come and sweep and mop the whole place because they expect the Most High is coming. Even during midweek somebody is still there keeping things in order.”
 P107. Q3

Flood
 Noise

Disturbing neighbours

Congested living quarters
 (face-me-I-face-you)/ /Church
 loudspeakers

Air pollution

Bad odours: “When you mentioned pollution I thought about the problem from the refinery. From time to time there is a bad odour that emanates from there. If you are not aware, you will be wondering where this is coming from, because you cannot breathe in. But those of us who know will just endure it.”
 Q4

Refinery emissions

Churches
 inconvenience
 neighbours

D17

Rev Dr Oil Pollution
 Cheetham
 Cheetham-West
 (Native, MCA
 member) –

Tampering with animal, plant and aquatic life forms/ /damaging livelihood/ /death//
 If you were from this area and you find oil floating on top of the water

Oil leakages

Gov’t & oil
 companies
 suppress popular
 protest. Cites
 example of

CHURCH
 ACTION: ‘I think
 that on unit basis
 the church may be
 trying to do

FINANCE: No,
 you see, now
 you mention a
 very critical
 issue which is

Chim Wetalu

He sees oil wealth as 'God-given' [Q1].

or in the mangrove, therefore polluting the water and killing off animals you will feel very unhappy. Like the place where oil was first found, Oloibiri, which has become a kind of desert now, it is very serious. And it is not only Oloibiri. So, also the other parts [of the ND]. Now if you take away that we hear they flare gas into the air, and if you find our roofing sheets they are all damaged. A very serious damage too. And talking about flaring, gas flaring, it means that the air too is polluted. It is a very serious problem [Q8]

Wiwa and Boro

something... I also not very mean wherever we good because meet we try to keep everything we it as neat as we can. tend to come up But my memory with ends up fails me to think with how much that we have come money is it out as a bringing. And I denominational think that is the group to say this is death of most of what we will do those things. towards attacking Every congregation is this particular crying out there problem. But if you is no money look at our [Eleme is again. church] compound Everything we are trying to eventually ends keep it as clean as up with how we can. And I think that other much money congregations are will it bring? trying to do that' AIDS, how [Q6] much money? [Q7]

Flared Gas (Air Destroying roofs/ /endangering Flared gas/ /Collusion between pollution) human and other life forms/ gov't and oil companies/ /Citizens tolerance

THE EFFECT OF OIL POLLUTION: "we are not so happy about the way it is exploited, or the use to which it is put. We seem to be neglected in the use of this God-given [resource]...I don't know what to call it...it is something God has given us which has more or less become a curse now. The way it is exploited tends to interfere with the organisms in the sea, because sometimes there is oil pollution and the thing flows all over the water. And since we are people who live in water area, to allow such a thing to happen means we are tampering with our livelihood. If you were from this area and you find oil floating on top of the water or in the mangrove, therefore polluting the water and killing off animals you will feel very unhappy. Like the place where oil was first found, Oloibiri, which has become a kind of desert now, it is very serious. And it is not only Oloibiri." P107 [Q2]

Bad Roads Sense of pity and dissatisfaction
Corruption Stealing public funds [Q6]
Population Mismanagement is the problem
Unemployment Desperation/ /thievery/

PCN's POOR EVANGELISM RECORD: 'But I don't know, Presbyterian Church we have a bad tale in evangelising. We find it hard to bring in people, rather our members run out to join other growing churches. Here in Eleme the PCN is mostly made up of traditional Presbyterians. We find it difficult to get the local people. Even when they come for a short while, after seeing us the person escapes. I don't know how we can begin to sell ourselves, how we can now begin to win groups to ourselves.' Q3

	Power (electricity) Nepotism and Cronyism Noise	Darkness/ /low quality of life/ / Appointing unqualified people	Loudspeakers from churches and mosques/ /public transport/ /traders/ /face-me-I-face-you			
	Waste management	LOSS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: "But people often say 'cleanliness is next to godliness.' When I was growing up as a child even the way we relate to animals is all tending to the environment. We don't keep dirt [waste] anywhere. I went from home to Onitsha, in those days you will see the way our mothers will decorate our mud houses, and you will see that Africans are clean. But we tend to be losing all that." P112 [Q4]		Church does clean- up, at least once a month/ /Arms such as WG are mobilised to act: "I will put it this way, that what I find being done here is to be carried by the individuals to their homes. Like the Women's Guild they try to encourage mothers to keep their homes and look after members of their families, make good meals." P112 [Q5]		
E18	Mr Felix Kalu (Non-native, MCA member) – <i>Festus Karl</i>	Insecurity	IDPs. "Before the presence of JTF [Joint Task Force] and internal security, we had no peace of mind because of lack of security. The Yege Boys used to loot the area claiming the town to be theirs. Even those of us who are strangers ran	Inter-communal war/ /Harassment from Cults and gang	"Police had no solution...It is only the presence of the Joint Task Force (JTF) that has made the place	Since the bible enjoins us to be good to our neighbours, I think something like picking up our brooms and

			helter-skelter. In fact, it was so bad in 1993 that I chattered a vehicle that evacuated my property to my village Ohafia [in Abia Sate]. Then there was also the Andoni v Ogoni crisis and other intertribal wars. There was harassment from different gangs/cult – Yege Boys and Dekpa – and the police had no solution to this. It is only the presence of the JTF that has made the place calm now.” Q1		calm now.” P133 [Q2]		organising a group to take care of the environment, will be nice. At least some day, they [neighbours] will move into the town and do something [too]’ (E18/2012/28-9)
		Oil pollution	Spoiling the water	Operational accidents/ /vandalism/ /oil theft/			
		Noise	Noise and air pollution/ /long-term health effect	Portable electric generators from artisans			
	“Cleanliness is next to godliness” [Q3]	Waste	Dirty environment: ‘There is no amount of poverty that should make the church not to do something. An individual can contribute N1,000 towards the cost of a shovel.’ [Q4]	Domestic and commercial/ /unsanitary habits/ /no designated place	Local Gov’t is overwhelmed	Recommends: Church should be organised/ /sell the vision to members and public/ /members to be good to neighbours/ /contribute money for this env cause/ /	Not aware of PCN action
E19	Yigabari Egbara (Native, MCA member) – <i>Yelga Egba</i>	Oil Pollution	Polluting land, water and air/ /affects farm crops, fish, oyster, animals and natural habitat & ecosystem/ /unemployment/ /hunger	Irresponsibility of Oil companies/ /No serious regulation/ /spillage	Gov’t and oil company failure/ ‘government refuses to fulfil their responsibility... government is part of that business of corrupting the system’ Q1 p96		The Church is hampered by lack of funds/ /collusion with Gov’t /

Corruption	Oil bunkering/ /proliferation of arms/ /kidnapping/ /violence/	Corrupt politicians and gov't officials/ "It is the Senators and the National Assembly who are corrupting this country." Q2 P97	
Oil bunkering	Pollution/ /bunkering/ /	"The poor cannot drive this business..." p97. Q3	'There are illegal refineries; poor people cannot open the oil refinery. When the people buy a farm, they buy it based on what they want from that farm [food]. So it is the people that we elected that are the ones destroying and affecting the environment.'
Population (not a problem)		Poor management and control is the issue	
Unemployment	"nobody wants to go to school again due to unemployment." P97 Q5	"Youths are not engaged" Q6	
Amnesty	Corruption	Gov't paying people for nothing	
Waste			'There is no amount of poverty that should make the church not to do something. An individual can

E20	Ewunee Confidence (Native, Youth member) – <i>Endurance Comfort</i>	Oil Spill	Loss of species due to destruction of habitats and bio-diversity	Oil companies	Gov't set up Ogoni Trust Fund and HYPREP	'I think of one by this current Moderator. I think he is doing better than the previous ones.' [Q7]/ /Should insist on implementation of UNEP Report	contribute N1,000 towards the cost of a shovel.' Q7
	Theology: Phil. 4:6 should be the Church's guiding word for action	Toxic Waste Emission		Oil companies		Says the Church is doing nothing; plagued by backwardness/ /use their members in gov't/ /use international partners like PCUSA Prosperity theology and private jet pastors	Failing in their responsibility to speak to the people/ /individuals are demonised & branded as activists
		Climate Change [Q7]	Unpredictable weather patterns/ /flooding/ /deaths/ /				Inter-Church cooperation is problematic/ /CAN disunity/ /loss of Confidence on CAN leaders because of compromise
	Ozone Layer Depletion [Q8] Air pollution		Respiratory hazards/ /younger people dying	Emission of Greenhouse gases Release of hydrocarbon in the air/ /Toxic wastes	World gov'ts not doing anything		Advocacy: "They should use their voice,

because their
voice can go
far.” P138 [Q2]

FEAR: ‘Everybody is less concerned but when you come out to speak they see you as an activist, and so you are not a Christian as an activist... I will say the Church they are somehow backward. They have not been able to stand up to their responsibilities speaking for the people they are pastoring. Nobody has done anything but the campaign is still on.’ [Q3]

Corruption

Bad regulation

Bribery that subverts

Gov’t inaction

So the church has to come out now and speak for its people because this same church will be asking for 30% [contribution of their incomes from these local churches] to be remitted to the parish. Their only concerned about their 30% and establishing more churches. At least they should feel the pain of their people because they are their people over there. They should know what they are passing through and add their voice to theirs. At least this church they have people in gov’t, and if the Mod of GA rises to say something, at least their representatives in gov’t will facilitate this information and make sure that things are being done. So the church has to rise to its responsibility. They should use their voice, because their voice can go far.

Unsanitary conditions

Sicknesses and death/ / Unsanitary conditions

Waste

Public nonchalance/ /ignorance of consequences/ /

Bad habits/culture: ‘Apart from the multinationals and their emissions, we humans we emit wastes too and it is a kind of culture we have imbibed not to clean our surroundings. Even when we find someone doing it we cannot join them rather we dump more refuse there. And when it comes to sanitary conditions we ourselves say ‘dirty nodi kill African man [dirt cannot kill an African]. To clean our surrounding is a problem to us. And it has really

Public reaction: “Doti nodi kill African man”. That is “Dirt (refuse) cannot kill an African”[Q4]

been affecting us seriously. There are various kinds of illnesses here and there. If you get to the hospital you will get the statistics of sick people.'
Q6

Flooding

EFFECT OF POLLUTION: 'The environment will still have more effect on the people. If you check the age bracket of those who are dying here, you will find that they are mostly youths of thirty to forty years old, as a result of this pollution around us. The air we are inhaling is hydrocarbon, even the water we drink, we are drinking hydrocarbon. There is even more than the required [acceptable] level of hydrocarbon according to the UNEP Report. You will see that the environment has really been spoilt, depleted, by these multinational oil companies.'
[Q5]

F21	Cecilia Olgio (WG) – <i>Charity Ogoni</i> : says she has lived with oil issues since childhood. But Shell used to maintain the pipelines in time past	Oil Pollution	Contaminated the farms, fishes, mangroves and killing aquatic life such as periwinkle, shellfish/ acid rain/ /Disease and death/ /	Oil spill due to burst oil pipes owned by Shell/ /neglected old pipelines	
		Waste is still handled in small scale means by burying, used as farm manure or dumping in the sea	Pollutes the water		
F22	Elder G V Zagaben (native Fisherman) – <i>Vincent Zam</i>	Oil Pollution	Destroyed mangrove forests/ /killed fishes/ /paddles canoe for 4-5 hours [x2] into the sea to find fish/ /destroys fishing nets/bad crops/ / /fish smelling of crude oil/ /People are sick and dying [Q1]	Oil spillage/ /indiscriminate disposal of [toxic] oil waste [Q2]	No proper help from Gov't. SOLUTION: change of the government for one that listens to the people
		Unemployment? No. People are still working	Not having much to do anymore/ /no business/ /no farming/ /no		

G23

	hard. Flood	fishing/ "it is affecting us now"		Church raised funds for the relief of flood victims.
	Human waste	Unsanitary conditions	No toilets	Church needs money to organise teachings
<p>Elder Mrs Constance Ukpai (Chika Uka)</p> <p><i>'It all depends on aspiration and vision. If you look at this environment, you will find out smaller churches coming up before you know it they will become bigger than us why, because they know how to relate to people especially young people, because young people are looking for people to show them a bit of care and compassion [Int.G.23/2012/</i></p>	<p>Oil Pollution: 'so we don't even have adequate vegetation around us, the water has been polluted so the fishes that use to exist are no more there and when you go to the riverine areas is worse because you see lots of waste land because oil has made the land unusable because of oil spills and all that. So there's a lot of it around us, so you see people living in poverty in the midst of plenty. You see people from an oil enriched place but they are not enjoying the prosperity of the land because somehow either their leader compromised, took things [bribes], sold their lands for peanuts, sold their consciences for</p>	<p>Land, water and their resources have been destroyed/ /depletion of vegetation/ /wasted and unusable land/ /</p>	<p>Oil spill/ /oil theft and bunkering/ /poor industry standards due to corruption/ /</p>	<p>'We need to meet more with the people and help the community, it could be in terms of opening bore holes in the community, it could be repairing roads or maybe refurbishing schools. I mean tangible thing that people can see, not just having your own Presbyterian Hope Waddell institute, maybe take a particular community it might...maybe their toilet and it will be the PCN contribution to the community. It</p> <p>"If am to say the Presbyterian Church has been far removed from the environment and its problems. If you look at what other churches are doing, I once went to the market, and I saw the Living Faith Church members helping to clean the market, am just using them as an example and they said it was part of their community campaign. Another friend of mine called me one time as well telling me there was a bad spot in Woji</p>

Q7].

immediate things.’ Q1

could be their market. But if we understand that the society where we live on and build our churches also have problems then people would want to come to us because they know our message will reach out to them [Q5].

which they are trying to repair. So in all of these, we find out that other churches have a way of encouraging youths, try to come out best in the community, but **the Presbyterian Church we are so busy with our mechanical orders** that we are lacking in these things.” [Int.G.23/2012/ Q2

Theology: Jesus ministered to people’s spiritual and physical needs as well

Poverty

“people living in poverty in the midst of plenty”. P41 [Q8]

Lack of “aspiration and vision” she says is plaguing the PCN. Also inability to reach younger people like newer generation churches. [Q9]

PCN not encouraged youths/ /busy with mechanical order [structures]/ /lack of community engagement. “the only time we try is maybe during Palm Sunday when we dance around, apart from that

Flood

Unplanned housing on flood
plains and water courses/
/blocked drains

'...if mosquitoes
bite you while you
are saving souls,
for crying out loud
you are going to
have Malaria. If
you help people
clean their gutter
you are impacting
on their
environment.' Q6

we just do
business with
ourselves" P34.
(Int.G.23/2012/3
5)

OBSTACLE:
"the obstacles
sometimes has to
do with finances,
because we are
indebted to a
higher body that
does not have
this vision, the
tendency is that
they want to
channel their
resources to
other things. So
by the time you
finish paying
what you are
supposed to pay
to the higher
courts you just
merely have
enough to exist"
P43
(Int.G.23/2012/
Q4)

Unplanned
urbanisation
Land Use

No clear regulation on dry and wet
places, industrial and residential
areas

No standards/ /poor regulation/
/corruption/

Indiscriminate sale of land by
the natives

Militancy: 'Somehow, Rampage and destruction of lives

Political thugs/ /Corruption and Gov't amnesty

the politician used some of them to get their political aspiration and after that left them in the cold, and after that it brought a lot of rampage in our land and we lost so many things including a lot of money.' Q10

AMNESTY
AND ITS
CHALLENGES

In the amnesty deal they were meant to drop their weapons and get some kind of compensation by the government. So many of them did and government took them into a program, started training them, some were given large contracts, and because of that they dropped their guns and left the Niger Delta. So the money we lost to amnesty we started recouping them again. But as time has gone on, I have started noticing that little groups have started arising looking for some sort of recognition but then is not in the same skill as the first group, so more or less I will say the problem was solved by that amnesty program, but I hope the government can continue to sustain it because recently we heard the president saying there's a lot of bunkering going on, they are no more kidnapping people instead they are stealing crude, and people they gave amnesty contracts seems to have become big guys in Abuja and enjoying life and forgotten what they were fighting for. So when you put a program that is not sustainable that is what happens [Q11].

G24

Barrister Anya
K. Anya (MCA)
– *Andrew Apple*

Poor Urban planning

Unapproved building structures/
/breeds squatters/ /poor sanitation/

unplanned development/
/attitude of the local people/
/selling and buying land/
/unplanned situations/ 'Big
Oga' Syndrome/

Holistic
approach
needed:

'Whatever money we have...Right now...we are...channelling most of it to complete the building. So, that is one of the setback we have. But once we have finished that, what we need to do is say we are going to do this water [flood] project (Int.G23/2012/Q

<p>CULTURE: 'Onye ahala nwanne ya.' Literally means, 'do not leave or forsake your kin', or 'Be your brother's keeper' Q1</p>	<p>Flooding Land Crisis Waste management</p>	<p>Eyesore//</p>	<p>No drainages/ /Rainfall/ / Indiscriminate land sale and development Wastages/ /domestic and industrial waste/ /poor evacuation regime/ /system is overwhelmed, not keeping pace//</p>		<p>Arms like MCA, WG, PYPAN are mobilised to show leadership in Church and community</p>	<p>PCN is not visible/ /Financial pressure on the local church for building e.t.c., not much is left afterwards [Q17] /</p>
	<p>Corruption: 'For pollution, the problem has always been there, but was suppressed with the fact that these oil companies were paying for some of these in liaison with traditional rulers. The traditional rulers stood in between the communities and the oil companies are ones who collected some of the money.' Q13. 'Some of them trained their children and relatives to the detriment of the entire community.' Q14</p>	<p>“corruption is the key, once we get corruption arrested, it will now give way, the right person will get scholarship, have access to health, and so on. So corruption is the key, so if we get it out of the way, there is no law in this country that we cannot implement.” P48 Q2</p>	<p>Excessive liberties and favouritism</p>	<p>Gov't must be sincere and fight corruption/ / As long as we are speaking the truth they will not bombard us, and even if we do not speak the truth if they want they will bombard us if God allows it.</p>	<p>“There must be sincerity on part of the government. The government should be alive to its responsibilities. Also I believe in carrot and stick approach, government must clean up, provide for those communities and must also punish lapses.” Q12</p>	<p>POOR VISIBILITY: 'after the Presbyterian [General Assembly] conference you just see one small thing [communique] in the corner of a newspaper... as if we are hiding or afraid. The Presbyterian Church is not visible' (Int.G24/2012/Q 16)</p>
<p>THEOLOGY: “Psalms 24 it</p>	<p>Oil Pollution: “Mind you there is no</p>	<p>“Even the gas flaring areas like if you go to areas like Oporikom it is</p>	<p>Non-implementation of laws and regulations.</p>	<p>Gov't must be sincere in their</p>	<p>1) Church should solicit gov't help</p>	<p>1) “church must be involved in</p>

says the earth is the Lord's and its fullness, so if we know that what we have is Lords, it will be us who will help it to be clean, make it descent and habitable." P53 Q3

environmental law in the world that we do not have in Nigeria. The problem in Nigeria is implementation and while implementing you have the so called 'big Oga' syndrome and this may be 'big man' who is untouchable. There is no law that you can talk about in environment that we do not have in Nigeria. It is the implementation that is the problem." Q4.

the community that is in day light throughout the year because of gas flaring. It lights up all the community, they have no night neither day." P47 Q5

"There is clear pollution that is as a result of production, because there is no way you can produce oil without spilling some. That is why they have the remediation experts that try to clean up when they have worked, but the greater part of it is stealing and vandalism". Q6

promises to the people/ /Clear Derivation principle/ /Use carrot and stick approach/ /punish lapses/ /make communities part owners/ /clean-up pollution and resettlement people/ /build refineries and buy stake in foreign ones to reduce oil theft

and work in partnership with them. '...the structure of Presbyterian Church now, does not give that room for the intervention on some of these things. For instance we have the General Assembly [Moderator] who is elected every 6 years, after that the man's job is over. The same applies to the Principal Clerk who holds office for 6 years, and this overlaps with the Moderator's, for proper administration. But I want to see a situation where a general assembly head, that is our prelate, now it can be Rev Benedict Ndekor who is 40+ years, who has a focus, who can lead the church until he retires at 65. So that if he says

politics, economics and legal framework of the economy because the church cannot be only listening to charlatans" p50. Q7
2) "we have not used the plethora of talent we have within the church" p50 Q8
3) Tenure of Officers is short
4) Leadership
5) "the structure of Presbyterian church now, does not give that room for the intervention." P50 Q9
'What is actually left now is to do the ceiling and do the electrical works, and then the landscaping and then the place will be dedicated as a full Parish'

something, he is carrying the policy of the church without any truncation, like we have in Anglican and Catholic Church. [Q9] (Int.G23/2012/Q 15)

TYPES OF OIL SPILL: 3 types of oil pollution:

1. Result of the normal working of the oil as you may have leaks here and there.
2. Result of crude oil stealing
3. Result of vandalism where people because of one grievance or the other, they want to sabotage. [P48] Q10

“So those are the 3 types of oil spillage that we have discovered. Sometimes the greater part of this is as a result of accidents. Sometimes it is as clearly when these guys go because you can cut the place open and steal the crude but they do not have the technicality to put it back, until Shell knows about it.” Q11

G25	Engr. Chidi Ndukwe – <i>Chi Nedu</i>	Oil pollution	Degradation of the environment/ /increased cost of business for the oil companies/	Corruption leads to siphoning funds meant for remediation/ /Collusion between oil companies, gov’t and communities/ /gov’t failure to properly regulate industry/ /bunkering/ /sabotage/ /non-execution of remediation contracts	Governance issues/ / /Transparency is needed in how both oil companies and the gov’t are handling things/ /	Their bible study is rich and reflects on life challenges. ‘We have used real life pictures to challenge ourselves on how we live and draw attention to contemporary issues including the environment.’ P157. Q1	CHURCH ACTION: ‘The PCN is on the back row of church participation. It is rare to hear the church (PCN) being mentioned as having contributed THEOLOGY: ‘The bible says the creation, everything around us, yearns for the manifestation of the children of God. It is like there is a
	Local Proverb: ‘Ebe onye bi ka onawachi’, means ‘Where a man lives he keeps and secures.’ P155. Q2. ‘Also an Igbo proverb says	Neglect: ‘Traditionally there is something in our culture that presupposes care for the environment. It is something that is taught every child informally...learning from parents by example.’ P155. Q4	‘The look of the region is that of fulltime neglect...in the sense that there are other things that preoccupy people’s mind other than the environment.’ P155. Q5	Gov’t and oil companies/ /people due to poverty			

that...translates as “you cannot be at home and abandon your goat to give birth while on a leash”. So, even the goat is dependent on man. So, too the environment is dependent on us. If you look at it from that perspective the church should represent God in the environment.’ P157. Q3

to the solution. I don’t know why, or the details, but that is my blunt assessment.’ P156
 2) They should send communiques to gov’t asking them to take care of the environment.’ P157. Q6

dependence of the env on human beings from that perspective. The environment is your neighbour following the scripture ‘love your neighbour as yourself. So you need to take care of the environment.’ P155. Q7

COLLUSION OF COMMUNITY LEADERS: ‘The expertise required for remediation is with the companies, but the communities have developed a way of blocking the execution of this expertise in their communities because they have personal interest and gain. But they don’t know the damage they are causing to the larger community. Those at the authority in these villages want quick gain at the expense of the entire community. I have instances where I was involved in executing projects that will be beneficial to the community through environmental upgrade, but the community will demand personal favour or gratification. Such attitude portends danger to the entire community and environment. If only they know, they would have helped you remediate the environment before they even ask you for help or personal gain’. P156. Q8

Poverty

‘It seems the enormous energy or income required to take care of the environment is not in people. So they are more preoccupied with survival because of poverty and low income. A man that is dying will neglect the environment while looking for a means for survival.’ P155. Q9

‘It takes two to tango.’

CHURCH ACTION NEEDED:
 ‘Church should represent God by how they fulfil Scripture. Which is what I said previously that, ‘the earnest expectation of

CHURCH ACTION: ‘Let us begin from the structures we have built. It is in line with the **environmental standards and conforms with the regulations** that relate with the environment and planning. We have gone further to join the **landlords association to clear the drainage.** We have always **contributed money** whenever they are doing so.

Corruption

‘I think it is because the oil companies and the gov’t are tired of their shoddy work because it is not favouring them. The oil companies have realised that they are the ones losing in the sense that they still have the worsening cost of production due to all the problems including militancy. Unconducive environment is raising their cost of doing business. Transparency in gov’t and the companies has also made it easier for the communities to know what is happening and what to expect.’ Q12

‘The companies voted money on paper but did not release all of that for the environment. It takes two to tango. The collusion of the oil companies with these people has been the bedrock of the problem. But the increase in the percentage of the money going into the real project in recent times means that there is a lot of difference in both the environment and the people themselves.’ P156. Q13

‘If church buys a stream and sand-fills it to build, they are against God, they are against the environment. They should also speak against the people who do.

They might not have the money but they have the knowledge of the word of God and can transmit that knowledge to the

creation is waiting for the manifestation of the children of God’. Taking it literally means the cry of my goat expects that I will do something to help.’ Q10

‘In our Health Week we have dealt more with our body, our health. We have not actually narrowed it down to the environment. But we are so entrenched with ourselves, and until we survive before we can extend to the environment. So for me the PCN is interested on how it can stand first. We are like a crawling child we need to

But I said No, as well because we have the capacity to do more, we cannot rest on our oars. Q11

gov't.' p157. Q14

survive first before we can do anything.' P156. Q15

G26

Barrister Inyang *Edward Iniobong*

Edu

Oil pollution: The remedy is for 'Campaign by gov't and private jetty operators and engaging ex-militants to guard pipelines. UN report has indicted Shell for not taking care of its facilities; and Supervisory and regulatory agencies like DPR for not monitoring compliance in the industry.' P158. Q1
These should be acted upon

'Destroying source of livelihood'
NOISE: Noise pollution of course with the level of industrialisation you will be sure all these things will be expected, emissions from vehicles and all that will affect the environment. Even machinery in factories. [Q9]

Exploration activities/
/Nonchalance of oil companies and lack of maintenance/ /poor gov't regulation/ /bunkering/ /sabotage/ /vandalism

Ill-equipped gov't agencies: 'But for DPR to go to site to do its work, it relies on the same companies to transport, accommodate and feed them in order to do their job. How can someone who has received such favours come back and report anything negative? So, government agencies as it were have not been properly equipped in terms of monitoring the processes in the oil and gas industry.' Q2.

EDUCATION: 'May be in terms of educating the members. We have health or hiv/aids week, but do we have a week dedicated to the environment? Not to my knowledge. When it is brought into focus, it will be clearly managed, every discussion will be geared towards that.' Q3. P158

FEAR: 'The simple truth from my assessment is that in terms of campaign or drawing gov't attention to the plight, we have not done a lot. Don't forget that in Nigeria if you are too vocal you will be seen as an enemy of gov't. Our church will not want to be seen as an enemy of the state, in the process they have been mindful of what it will mean.' Q.4 P158

Gas flaring

Affecting the atmosphere

‘exploration activities have severely impacted on the environment, destroying the source of livelihood of the people in fishing and farming. Oil comes with so many other things, e.g. gas flaring, affecting the atmosphere and the people’ Q5

P158

Flooding
Climate Change

Climate change
Flooding:

Broken dam in Cameroon Q6
‘The recent flooding has never been experience in the Niger Delta before. It may be due to climate change, the dam in Cameroon, and so on. So many states have been affected in Nigeria as a whole’ Q7

Air pollution
waste

Blocked drainage/ /

Gas flaring/ /cars/ /industries
Industrial and domestic/ /Not removed quick enough/
/indiscriminate dumping of waste

Noise

Cars/ /industries/ /

SUGGESTED CHURCH ACTION: ‘The church is in the community and what happens to the environment should concern the church. Don’t forget that the church is like a company that is registered, so it has a role to play, even if to the extent of drawing gov’t attention to the problems. Don’t forget that members of the church live in the community. If the house of a member is flooded he cannot be in church. So what happens to the environment and the people who live in it affects the church. The church should be involved in a campaign for remedial action. The church is the custodian of morals. Don’t forget people like Desmond Tutu when apartheid was strong in S Africa, he was using the pulpit to criticise apartheid. Using the pulpit is a good way of drawing the government, drawing the politicians, every person that is in position of authority to their responsibility. So, the church has a role in campaign, even in educating their members on how to manage and how to react. That is to manage their environment in order not to create problems, and to know how to react when disaster calls. So the church has a role in education in campaigning against actions that lead to such difficult situations.’ P158. Q8

G27 Rev Ben Nze – Bad Road
Benedict

Traffic jam/ /breakdown of
vehicles/ /difficult access/ /people /

Heavy rain and watery terrain/
/

Gov’t has
demolished

‘Most of the time
we contribute some

‘Some body, an
Elder there lost

Ndikor

have to leave very early to get to work on time//

properties to create new access//

money and the church is part of this to keep this place going. Sometimes we bring in bulldozers and contractors to grade the road when it is too bad we do that once in a while. We grade it still hoping that the Governor will fulfil his promise... the church gives the major part of the money and other people who contribute come from various compounds. They [the association] have a secretary and president' Q1

his house. His house was completely submerged. So they raised an appeal through the Synod to the GA. So **while the GA was still deliberating on what do to the Synod took it up** and said, "what can we do? Let us raise one million Naira".' [Q9]

PROVERB: Insecurity
"Ebe onye bi ka O na wachi", meaning you should take care of your immediate environment. If there is any loophole you will also suffer it. So if that is

Kidnapping, even pastors/ /emergence of terrorist groups//

Arose from grievances of neglect/ /Opposition tactics to distract the President by pitting him against his own people//

The churches could come together and say this is a major environmental challenge how do we go about it start from the leadership they meet as one family, then each leader goes to

The parish helped to raise over N1million to release a kidnapped member/ /trained ushers for security duty/ /spiritual nurture/ /secured the neighbourhood

like a consciousness in our minds, maybe we shall not see it as for government, it is for us. So we start from where we are to start doing something. Even before going for government support.” P65 [Q2]

their own church brainstorm with them and come back with results and then when it comes to funding, they come together and see it as a common problem. Face it as challenge jointly.

RESPONSE TO SECURITY CHALLENGE: “Our own consciousness to it was awakened by the issue of kidnapping. That you should be in the church and somebody just gets lost right after. A family can come as one and they go fragmented. So we began to tell our Ushers that your work does not only stop in the church. We had divided them into groups, and we started having able bodied young men standing right out there. When the people [members] come in they show them how to park, get the cars arranged properly so that somebody can drive in and out of the compound. So we have people doing that now and from time to time, we organise seminars for them, teach them and show them what to do. Sometimes they feel they are losing, not working from inside and listening [to the sermons, and so on] and being part of the congregation. So from time to time we organise programmes for them to feed them spiritually and tell them that this is also part of the ministry they are running, so they should not feel they are missing out.” P64 [Q3]

Flood:
 “when you present such issues here within the local setting they will quickly remind you of even your own members who need such assistance... so when you now stand as a minister and begin making an open appeal the quick response will be ‘charity begins at home.’ What have we

Difficult movement/ /waterlogged premises and access/ /

Heavy rain/ /blocked drains/ /poor planning/ /people building on waterways/ /
 In fact, they could not worship on one Sunday. Then at Bayelsa station one of the key members we have there is an indigene. He even bought a mission car for them. Some body, an Elder there lost his house. His house was completely submerged. So they raised an appeal through the Synod to the GA. So while

There could even be a combined effort within a locality. The churches could come together and say this is a major environmental challenge how do we go about it. [They] start from the leadership, they

Synod and local churches raised funds and relief ahead of the GA to help victims/ /Church is praying for the gov’t to do their access road/ /

GA structures make response to issues very slow, “people who were displaced needed relief materials, rapid response for that matter, but you know we usually take our normal time it takes the process of the

done for ourselves before we talk of doing for the people outside?" P63 [Q4]

the GA was still deliberating on what do to the Synod took it up and said, "what can we do? Let us raise one million Naira"

meet as one family...then each leader goes to their own church brainstorm with them and come back with results. And then when it comes to funding, they come together and see it as a common problem. Face it as challenge jointly. It will also be easier to put the resources together to get it done. [Q9]

church legislation before you respond." P63 [Q5]/Financial constraints due to competing needs/ /members lost their property

Poor Town planning

Unplanned housing//

Breakdown of community spirit: "If in the village you go to some places and go somewhere to dig out sand come and fill up some pot-holes. You do not see many young people doing all that in the city here." P65 [Q6]

Community mobilisation to set up **Neighbourhood Association** and for security/ /**Church contributes** a larger percentage of the fund

THEOLOGY: 'In the creation story in the Bible, Genesis Chapter 2, God took the man whom He made and put in the garden to tend and keep it. So you see God Himself as the first environmentalist. The man was not supposed to be idle. Even before he created man he first of all made the garden ready for him so God wanted the man to be busy from day One. And he told him practically "your assignment is to tend and keep this garden". So that puts man in charge of the created order. You should not watch things just go any how without showing some concern and take it up as your own responsibility and doing something to better the place.' P65 [Q7]

Air pollution

Carbon monoxide poisoning//

High population density and housing/ /portable electric generator sets/ /car fumes//

NOVELTY FACTOR: "This dimension is just

	<p>“Ebe madu bi ka O na awachi”, meaning ‘Charity begins at home’. That is cleanliness starts from your immediate surrounding.” P67</p>	and urbanisation	water breeding vectors causing sickness such as malaria and typhoid/ /fire outbreaks due to congestion/ /		that needs to be mobilised for this cause, but the problem is how.	involved because it is not in their agenda. Not aware that the church is doing anything
H29		Oil pollution? Noise	Remotely experienced	Vehicles/ /business centres/ /homes/ /		
		Air pollution		Flaring dangerous gasses like CFC/ /car fumes		
	Cyril Onuoha – <i>Cyprian Onuma</i>	Inter-communal crisis	Destruction of lives and property, including the environment/ /	Shell not paying them compensation/ /Incitement and Subversion of Gov’t and oil companies/		
		Corruption		Shell inducements to enable them exploit oil resources/ /		
		Waste	Littering the environment	Lack of education/ /Weak and corrupt Gov’t agents collect money do nothing/ /Broken family and community solidarity/		PCN has not done anything/ /No programs for youth/ /internal church problems
		Poor drainage systems		Weak construction by compromised contractors		
H30	Marvellous Obinna Awa – <i>Maxwell Obadiah Alwell</i>	Acid rain	Destroying roofs, farms, human lives/rusty roofs/			The PCN is losing its youth to other churches, including the

respondent
because of lack
of care for them

Gas flaring: “They have the well head at Ndoki where they have the flared gas...there is another pollution during the circulation of the well. They spray the hydrocarbons in order to energise the hydro carbon coming up, so they use what they call hydraulics. So spraying hydraulics within the environment, you cannot farm there any more. So that is one of the major negative impacts.” Q1	Acid rain/ /skin cancer	Shell and other oil companies are responsible	
Air pollution	Hydrocarbon/ /health issues/ /	Flared gas/ /lack of control	
Oil pollution	Hampers agric and economic activities/ /oil in water/ /poverty	Spraying hydrocarbon during well maintenance/ /	
Insecurity	Kidnapping/ /rape/ /robbery/ /cultism/	Dissatisfied youth organised & picked up arms/	Gov’t amnesty has reduced it to barest minimum through skill training/ /
Waste management	People dispose waste anyhow/ /		State gov’t has sensitised the public on how to handle waste/ /provided pick up points and

equipped
agency/ /

Population Increase People moving from Port Harcourt
to Oyigbo/ /high cost of land/ /
Bad Roads

THEOLOGY: “2nd Peter, the Bible says, He [God] has given us things pertaining to life and Godliness. In Ephesians 1: 3, says I have given you all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. So it is our duty to possess it. Genesis 1 says, We should have dominion over all things...it is our duty is to start taking it – natural mineral, the vegetation, the fruits – everything has been made available. So, we should just have them.” [Q2]. He says the attitude should be of ‘righteousness, love, joy, care and peace’. P79 [Q2]

H31	Annah Agwu – <i>Antoinette</i> <i>Anietie</i>	Unplanned development Flooding Open drains High population density Noise Air pollution	Congestion/ /poor housing/ /excessive heat due to poor ventilation and close housing/ / Breeds mosquitoes causing malaria fumes	Poor drainage Sound of Electric generators Smoke from generators	Church needs to encourage young people. It is plagued by inadequate resources She has not seen the PCN doing anything yet. Members are not yet enlightened on the benefit for church and society Posting policies need reviewing to put ministers in the proper places according to their gifts
H32	Rev Oti Alu – <i>Oscar Alaba</i>	Poor sanitation	Health risk/ /air pollution/ /uncleaness/	‘The environment of these areas mentioned looks like typical village rather than township. The people live close together, water, dirt, and so on. Those places are very dirty. There is dirt everywhere...They now still	

<p>THEOLOGY: He advocates a 'full Gospel' that addresses the spiritual and the physical, and so believes that 'Cleanliness is next to godliness' Q2</p>	<p>Acid rain: "the environmental hazards that are being caused by air borne pollutions are not all that felt here in Oyibo area as it is felt in Obuzo, the other side of my Parish where we have the Shell company." Q3 Poor waste management</p>	<p>Air pollution/ /affects roofs/ /costly house maintenance/</p>	<p>have public toilets, where if there is room, the water [sewage] from such areas comes out to make that place hazardous for a normal human being to dwell. Especially when it rains you find it difficult to walk into those places... when I say typical village I am talking about a slum area.' Q1 Effluence from oil installations carried by wind/ /Shell is responsible</p>	<p>Individuals to learn to dispose refuse/ / Parish raised money for PCS&D/ / awareness on environment</p>	<p>Church needs to put environment on its agenda e.g. during AIDS Week. Use available resources such as Hymn book, citing Abu 240 which encourages synergy of efforts and resources, 'Gi no n'akuku gi, mu no na nkem'. P85 Q4</p>
<p>Overpopulation</p>	<p>Creating slums</p>	<p>Lack of regulation</p>	<p>planning and Gov't needs to increase social amenities to</p>		

<p>ACTION: “there is one man who came from SSS who spoke to us on how to care for the environment security-wise. The Presbyterian church invited him to speak to us here in the church in December ...The man gave us tips on the issue of security.” P83 Q5</p>	<p>Noise pollution Insecurity</p>	<p>Kidnapping</p>	<p>Church loud speakers Militancy</p>	<p>cope with population increase</p> <p>Police extorted money at security check points</p>	<p>Synod put up communiques on the ND situation/ /Local church did enlightenment campaign led by SSS operative/ /Awareness on the care of the environment//</p>	<p>Church members were victims of Kidnapping</p>
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THEOLOGY: Full Gospel should be able to address the soul and environment where somebody stays. There is this saying that state: ‘cleanliness is next to Godliness’. This should be taken very seriously. I think there is a passage in the scripture that supports keeping the environment clean, you cannot cook and take to the toilet to eat. The Holy Spirit dwells in a clean environment and if that is the case, the church as we are packaging soul winning, you win that soul and win the total person. We were taught in CEM (children evangelism ministry) to be complete mentally, to be guided spiritually, to be educated socially, so everything about somebody should be complete. Somebody said that we should not be ‘too heavenly minded to be earthly useless’. So if the church is concentrating on winning souls and we are careless about the environment and we are staying here, then it means that we are not really following the Master...” Q6. “There is something related to the environment – ‘clean the environment before they bring in the sacrifice, environment meaning the altar. Leviticus 6: 8-13.” Q7

<p>I33</p>	<p>Rev Kalu Ulu Eme Social Injustice</p>	<p>Extreme disparity/ /criminality/ /militancy/ /arms proliferation</p>	<p>Unfair allocation of oil wealth/ /lack of true political opposition to gov’t/ /Gov’t intransigence//</p>	<p>Gov’t should implement the recommendation s of its Commissions of</p>	<p>PCS&D ACTION: Health intervention/ /Prophetic role/ /Issuing communiques/</p>	<p>PCN needs to look at its mission policy</p>
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enquiry including the Willinks Commission /Helping the needy in society by relief/ /Deliberate social responsibility/ /Women empowerment/ p

SOCIAL INJUSTICE: I would say that the ND poses one of the most disturbing disorders in Nigeria. The ND is a problem of social injustice, it is a problem of physical degradation of the environment, it is a problem of neglect. The ND is an environment of extreme disparity. People say this is a paradox, it is a paradox in the sense that in spite of the fact that this is the area that controls the oil wealth of Nigeria it's been neglected for quite a long time by the gov'ts we have had in terms of physical development. And the oil companies that exploit these oil resources are also not coming forward in terms of environmental sanitation. One of the fallouts of oil mining is environment pollution and they are not doing well in cleaning up. They neglect their roles and responsibilities in cleaning up, and this affects the health of the people and also affects their farmlands and fishery resources, because they are farmers and fishermen. All these as far as I'm concerned is social injustice. Q8

<p>THEOLOGY: Neglect "If you look at Deuteronomy you will discover that God made laws for everything, including how you treat the animal of your neighbour. It is an all-inclusive law. If you look at the OT very well you find that there is something for every aspect of human endeavour. I am sure if we check very well we will find where God specifically</p>	<p>Neglect</p>	<p>Physical degradation/ /social unrest and protests/ /</p>	<p>Lack of social amenities</p>	<p>Provision of social amenities//] Ana okpupo juo onyi ewu arande ya. If the floor is not cool the goat will not lie there. If the env is not good people will not live there. Egbe anagh aru uru or anyu nshi n'akwu ya. The kite does not defecate in its nest. If you look at its nest it is always clean.</p>	<p>Let's get back to what is the role of the church in the first place. If you read the bible the role of the church is not to get involved physically, a kind of going to war to fight. Our instrument is our voice. Even in the church when you try to convert people or you want to establish a righteous nation, the instrument is our voice. God has only asked us to preach the word what happens after is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>'the prelate was here yesterday and he spoke to me...he told me he was developing an article entitled 'Are we running a secular state or an Islamic State' based on all the things that are happening. And he will end by asking the whole church through CAN (Christian Ass of Nigeria) to call a period of fasting to mourn for Christians who are being slaughtered</p>
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talks about the environment.”
P127. Q1

So look at it this way or that way you will think that the church has limitation, but that **voice alone coupled with the action of the Holy Spirit is a lot.** So, when people ask what has the church done? I wonder whether they want us to go and protest and carry placards or carry out the kind of fasting that Mordecai (OT uncle of Esther) did in public [Q7]

every day, and secondly to ask the question “what are we running into”? If he does this and the CAN leadership calls this fasting I believe it will yield a lot of results. So, we are doing our best. There is this constitution review going on, we have made suggestions and proposals to them including true federalism, resource control, secular state, or even on elections [Q6].

Poverty [Q9]	Desperation/ /criminality	Loss of livelihood	Provision of alternative means of livelihood and employment	PCN has established presence with the planting/building of new churches.
Oil Pollution	Destroyed means of livelihood, farmlands, water sources and fisheries/ /poor health/ /	Poor governance/ /lack of CSR/	Gov’t should put support structures in place	

GOVERNMENT

And church speaks about it. When you teach people how to keep their environment clean, to pack their refuse and take it to a designated place and nothing happens, what can you do? But then there is no opposition in Abia State, nobody tells the government in the state what they are doing is wrong except the

INTRANSIGENCE

church. And when they know there is nothing you can do except talk, they will continue in what they are doing. So, it goes beyond what the church is doing, it concerns crass irresponsibility of the gov't [Q2].

Flooding Destroying people's lives and livelihoods Rainfall and increased water levels/ /dam water/ /natural delta terrain/ /

Poor Housing Waste congestion Lack of systemic approach/ /no designated place to poor it out

PCN is deploying members through its Arms to do teachings and mobilisation [P126] Q3

Corruption Compromised system/ /underdevelopment/ /obstructing implementation of UNEP Report on Niger Delta Bad governance/ "Gov't has been sinking a lot of money into the ND but it goes into the hands of a few and it ends there." P127 [Q4]

ON CULTURAL VALUES: "Values have changed. You have just mentioned a **primordial sense of value**. It is very important but that probably was twenty or thirty years ago. You will be surprised that when you go to the village it doesn't happen again. And why is it that it doesn't happen again because **values have changed**. People are no more concerned with godly values, no more concerned with moral values, they are now concerned with '**million values**' [money-driven values]. Everybody wants to be a millionaire. But I also have to blame the church because of **prosperity preaching** that has helped to change the fabrics of society. Where the church now gives awards to people, for example Ezinne, Ezinna, Knight of this and that, even when we know that these people do not really deserve it.

In the villages these things [moral values] don't happen again. In those days when someone left the village and came back with a car after six months the village head will call your parents and your kindred to come and explain how you got the sudden wealth. And if there is no good explanation they will ostracise him, but today if you leave the village a poor man and come back with a Jeep after three days they will make you a chief. So values have really changed, nobody cares about anything. Moral values, godly values have changed." P127-128 [Q5]

October 10, 2016: In a phone conversation Eme confirmed that the PCN has no environmental policy, or a systematic theology of the environment. He promised to send me copies of past communiques, but has so far not done so.

I34 Rev Okechukwu K. Iro Oil Pollution Increased environmental pollution/ /increased CO2/ /increased risk of global warming/ /destruction of aquatic & plant life/ /acid rain/ /human health risks/ [Q8] Oil exploration/ /flaring of liberated gas/ /Corruption/ /poor regulation/ /

The PCN is not doing direct environmental intervention yet, but is in its plan for the future

AIR POLLUTION FROM CAR FUMES: "When we increase the number of cars in the name of development they increase particulates [in the air] that affect the lungs. These [particulates] increase environmental oestrogens like lead which actually affect reproduction causing infertility among animals and human beings. Research has shown that boys who are

born along the road where particulate like lead are released, they have small testes which [could potentially] hamper their future reproductive capacities. Then when we are talking about environmental pollution you find that carbon monoxide is released by the cars causing problems in respiratory organs. You have increase in cough, asthma, cattergh. And even Nitrogen oxide is released by the cars which also exacerbate lung problems.” Q1

Air pollution	Increased carcinogens in the air/ /increased greenhouse gases, i.e. methane and CO2/ /infertility due to lead particulates in the air/ /no plants to absorb it/ /respiratory diseases//	Liberated gas	PCS&D is doing BCC on how to keep your environment clean, reducing Global Warming, not cutting down trees.	Limited by poor funding, staffing, ill-equipped human resource base
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There is increased env pollution and degradation as a result of oil exploration. About 80% of gas liberated from the oil fields are flared. They increase env pollution. Certain substances are released into the air that are carcinogenic such as dioxins. There is also CO2 that results in acid rain. People drink it like that and it causes cancer. Apart from the effect on human life it also destroys aquatic and plant life. And because plant life is destroyed there is increased carbon dioxide in the air since there are no plants to absorb it. The effect on human health is thus increased to a dangerous level. [Q2]

Flooding	Environmental disasters/ /ground is saturated/ /blocked drainage/ /encourages vectors and pathogens	Burst dams in Kainji/ /Global Warming/ /excessive rainfall//	
Gas flaring	Ozone layer depletion/ /aridity//	[Q7]Gov’t shifting the end date for gas flaring/Q7 /lack of political will/ /Lack of concrete plans, and lack of courage to follow through.	
Corruption Unplanned urbanisation	Bad governance/ Houses built in wrong places/ /blocked drainage and flooding/ /No streets planned/ /inadequate social amenities//	Bad governance Poor regulation and implementation of policies and laws//	PCS&D is strong in the areas of Women empowerment, HIV/AIDS, peace building and governance, destitution and rehabilitation (relief), and adult

PCS&D Action: 'You see there must be a motivation. We think that if somebody's health is involved, somebody's life is involved somebody will be motivated to carry out an intervention or an activity. That is why we are looking at it from there. For instance most of our behaviour change communication materials we highlight the benefit to your health and then tell you what to do. The most important thing is not from which angle, but we want you to keep your environment clean. If we tell

Poor management

Waste Indiscriminate dumping of waste/ /poor collection regime/ /poor sanitation/ /compromising public health/ /infected water sources

Gov't not paying contractors/ /bribery and corruption/ /bad job by contractors/surface public toilets/ /irregular evacuation of wastes/ /ignorance/ /non-enforcement of laws/ /bad public habit

Gov't should increase funding/ /provide logistics and transport/ /implement existing laws and policies/ /strengthen regulatory agencies/

education

PCS&D is doing advocacy, education and behaviour change intervention, e.g. on schistosomiasis. It pins its environmental intervention on health implication to get popular attention.

Lack of funds. PCS&D is now encouraging Synods to pick up environmental issues, e.g. Synod of the West is even attending international conferences

that you that the
 env that is dirty
 is likely to kill
 you and you
 want to live,
 you will do
 anything
 possible to live.’
 [Q3]

What is need, he says is Behaviour Change: “but you know that behaviour change is a process that takes time. People are doing awareness and behaviour interventions, but it is just that it takes time and we need to sustain it. Not a one-off awareness campaign. It is not enough to do it just for a very short time. It has to be sustained over a long period, because behaviour change does not come that easily.” P131 [Q4]

October 10, 2016: In a phone conversation Iro confirmed that there is not PCN environmental policy, neither has it a systematic theology of the environment. He sent me the PCS&D’s BCC framework as a template of how their intervention will look like.

PLACE OF
 THE
 CHURCH/PUL
 PIT
 POOR
 FUNDING
 AND
 MANPOWER

You see the church is in a unique position in the sense that policy makers belong to the church. The people in the community they belong to the church. So if the church is serious advocacy can start in the church to talk to these people who are policy makers who will go there and make changes, and enforce the laws. Then behaviour change campaign should start in the church, because everybody in the church is looking at you, and in the mosques [as the case may be]. If somebody from the pulpit talks, people are more likely to listen than when they hear it from outside. The church should also take it upon themselves to educate the public about these things which we are trying to do (Int.J34/2012/Q5).
 As I told you it is all in our plan. The reason why we are not doing those things is first of all the funding for it. Two, we don’t have the human resources. We cannot do everything right now. For instance how many of us are in this department? Call it two, myself and my deputy. Every other person is hired per project [Q6].

J35

Barrister S. K
 Igbara (Native,
 non-member) –
 S Igbara

Silence of the Church [Q1]
 Continued injustices [Q2]/ /gov’t
 suppression and killing of Ogoni
 leaders [Q3]

[Q8] Spiritual Physical
 Engagement: Response:
 Praying/ /prophetic Finance the
 responsibility to tell poor/
 the truth/ /Use /scholarships/
 members in gov’t / /investigate
 Ogoni
 complaints/
 /Advocate for
 the people
 through fraternal
 partners [Q9]

Oil pollution [Q4] People and environment suffering Negligence of gov’t and oil Church is silent

	<p>CHURCH'S SILENCE</p> <p>VOICE</p>	<p>[Q5]</p> <p>'Yes, it only requires the Church to cry out on the basic truth. And for the Church to do that, the church should do investigation of our case. Is there really something paining this Ogoni people, is it something that could pain me too as a non-indigene if it happens to me? Should I have I suffered the same fate with this people, if it happens to me? Then that is the objectivity in what we are talking. The church can then say we don't like this thing happening to Ogoni people and possibly lead a delegation. Take for example your church coming together with other churches under the umbrella of the President of CAN to say let us see the President [of Nigeria] to ask what is happening with the Ogoni people, is the gov't not seeing what is happening?'</p> <p>The cry of the Ogoni people is not about money. What we want is who speaks for us and people will hear. And I think the church has a 'big mouth' [capacity] to do that speak. Every church has that spiritual independent mouth. When once they believe and trust in God they can speak, because they are talking about truth and justice. Nothing stops any church member from speaking it. If the person should be killed by the Nigerian gov't he becomes a martyr. If nobody recognises him like that here, heaven will recognise him because he died because of truth. Christ died because of truth.</p>	<p>companies [Q6]</p> <p>[Q7]</p>	<p>Oil Pollution: 'The govt has not done much, rather they have created the <u>scarcity that has led people to store petroleum products leading to unpleasant consequences.</u> Unreliable power supply and the unavailability of viable alternatives have led to the pollution of our environment.'</p>	<p>'We live in a celebrative community. People are always celebrating and always rejoicing. Sometimes you find a neighbour who just feels happy and he tunes the volume of his musical set to the highest level, and you find the walls of your house shaking because of the noise coming from your neighbour rejoicing. And then you find people who throw parties, almost every day of the week there is one party or the other, one celebration or the other. People celebrate for their birth, celebrate for children, celebrate for houses, for apartments they have just received, for cars – new cars, used cars. And so there are so many reasons for celebration throughout the week, and sometimes these things bring noise pollution' [Int.K1/2009/Q1]</p>	<p>'Noise pollution related to <u>power generation.</u> Because most people cannot afford the noiseless generators, they can only afford the cheap noisy ones then you find that noise is everywhere.' Q2</p> <p>'The church's <u>finances</u> will find it difficult to bear the cost. The Nigerian church is still struggling to pay church workers. These churches are giving little tokens of <u>support to those who were affected by the crisis</u> to show that they are loved. Our own church for example gave <u>basic relief</u> to people who lost so much property'</p> <p>'And of course noise is not only from generators, you have churches and mosques with their megaphone just by your window. And when these megaphones are put in their loudest volumes they create noise pollution.' Q3</p> <p>'Special training is needed for pastors to assist them deal with the issues. There should be relation between churches and the people'</p> <p>'Amnesty was a 'At this stage</p>
K36	Rev Dr Benebo F Fubara-Manuel	MILITANCY: 'People	'The decision to rehabilitate LOCAL			

have made a theoretical distinction between those who are the real militants who fight for the marginalized people of the delta, and those who are criminals fighting for their own selfish interest.’

them was in the right direction. We must encourage the government to do so very speedily because anything short of that will mean endangering people’s lives when they take these militants from the creeks and put them back into the society without proper rehabilitation. We must encourage the government to face the process squarely.’

SUPPORT FOR MILITANTS?
‘The issue of local support is an outside construction. On the contrary people feared them because of the dangerous weapon, and thus tolerated them. Their activities gradually degenerated into criminality, hurting and molesting their fellow citizens because of their gun power.’

good thing. It proposed a different way of dealing with the problem of militancy’

there is the need for collaboration between pastors handling the spiritual aspect, psychologists handling the psychological angle and Sociologists handling the sociological dimension of the program in order to achieve a full rehabilitation and reintegration. Even civil rights organization should be involved to ensure that they are not victimized of stigmatized.’

K37 Rev Nnimmo Noise
Bassey

‘Many of our churches are not in the community – they are just existing in the corner. If they pack out, the neighbourhood will be happy. They will say “thank God the noise is gone. There will no longer be traffic congestion”. But if a church is active in the community,

The African Church has been characterized as one mile long and one inch deep. Now that sounds like an insult, but that says a lot. To a large extent our people go to church to feel good. And the pastors perform for them and if you bring deep

Churches are not buildings but I tell you the truth we invest a lot of money in buildings. We are branding and rebranding, the world is leading the

The church is rich. It’s a **matter of priority**. If the churches are frank enough to bring out their **budget** you will

if they want to move out, the community will say “No, Pastor where are you going? We want you here”. But how many churches will move and the community will complain? This should be a test for us.’ [Int.K2/2009/Q1]

issues that are challenging they don’t engage. People are looking for miracles, they want sudden wealth, they want to hear that they gave an offering of N10,000 and got a contract of N10m. Then people will say, they key into it – you don’t key into nothing, you are just greedy. God does not honour greed

church in these things, but we are not following after the environmental campaigns. I know that some churches and organization are doing something, but more can be done, massively and urgently too. be surprised to see that it is a matter of priority. If only they can reorder their priority. Is evangelism your priority? How much do they spend on evangelism? It is not that big crusades are not good, but big crusades will not convert the world [Q2].

SUGGESTED CHURCH ACTION: One way to do it is to create a department for the environment, but one should not do it alone there is the need for team work. We have to encourage theological institutions where there are pastors in training to include this in their curriculum. There are a lot of pastors in training. That is where to start, because the pulpit has power to hold and captivate many people, and can impact on people’s lives

CHURCH ACTION: The church has a huge role to play but there is a gap, the role is not being played at the moment. Probably the most active church may be the Roman Catholic Church through their JDPC. They are really involved politically and through other aspects of the struggle. I think there was also the social arm of CAN that was pushing, but I think that has also fizzled out

AMNESTY: The issue of the amnesty demonstrates the contradiction of our society. If they were serious militant groups that were fighting based on ideological position that amnesty would not have taken place at all because there was no basis for it. But because these guys are business people, they are looking for a quick way to exit from their tight position which they had to face in the creeks. To get recognized nationally, get paid from the tax-payer’s money, then build up new connections politically that will keep them in their fat accounts. So the leaders quickly said they accept.

And between them and the politicians there is no difference, many of them started out as thugs. So these are their friends – they are only moving into a new level of relationship. Now open and embracing in public as they did before in secret. If they were fighting for a cause, what has happened is just a charade, the amnesty wouldn’t have taken off at all. Even now I still think that this is not a long term solution because if the commanders are settled what happens to the foot soldiers? They too want to become commanders, and since you reward defiance and violence they can rightly expect that when it is their turn they too should be settled. So you are building a cycle that we pray will not mature.

K38

Rev Dr Paul O. Insecurity and Communal Crisis Ajah

‘It has been disastrous, because they fight over who receives accruing royalties, compensations, etc, with dire impact on the people and the environment. Usually the wreckages

‘Sometimes industries like the petrochemicals secrete some chemicals into the air that is so putrid, you can barely stay around here when that happens.

‘We are carried away by our pecuniary tendencies to acquire wealth’

‘The church has a role to play in all this things. We can even engage in village

are left as it is with no one removing them and adds to the defilement of the environment. People are thus impoverished the more, thus adding pressure to the environment [Q1a].
The presence of the industries appear to raise the question of whether they are a blessing or a curse to the people and their environment, with their potential to create riot in the communities and the attendant negative impacts on the environment.' [Q1b]

They are concerned in making their money and don't care how what they do affects people.' [Q14]

[Q3].
'There is the current debate on conflict resolution which the church is not really getting itself involved in. The militants are mostly Christians as statistics show but the church seems to be divorcing itself from the playing such role because it thinks its role is to save souls and not to get involved in things that should be done by government.'
Q4

beautification.
This can possibly be taken as a form of evangelism and I think it will be very fruitful to the church.' Q2
'We have not had any kind of training for our pastors in this regard [the environment]. In fact I feel ashamed as I talk to you. Our concern as pastors in the field appears to have been to fit people to go to heaven.' [Q12]

PROBLEM OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

I wonder sometimes whether we are developing or going backwards, should we go for industrialization or would we back-pedal; whether we even need to stop everything and go back to the ways of our ancestors, as it was before all these things began. May be that will serve us better. But what I surmised at the end was that we appear not to know how to manage what we have. If we put our minds together and work towards this, industries should improve the environment and not destroy it [Q9].

CHURCH NETWORK WITH GOV'T AND NGO

We all have a common interest in this and cannot stand aside in this same cosmos to see things go wrong. It is reasonable and mandatory for them to see that things work because we have the same stake. Even if the person in the government does not like the church, he/she has to play down on their prejudice in the interest of the environment. This is because the church is in the grassroots, the government is known more in the media, but the church is known in the home, at

the level of the poor people.

If the two collaborate closely there will be better result because then the government can pass its messages through the church, otherwise it will remain at the level of theory. It will sound to the people like something from another world. But if the church is involved they have a way of making the people own this project and do it as unto themselves, not for the government and expecting a reward or commendation. So government and church and the NGO have to work together [Q10].

NOVELTY
FACTOR

This is a very new area of research. You will hardly find any work of its sort in our research institutions. This is because people hardly link Christianity with the environment. They think of church only in terms of spiritual matters, spiritual cleanliness, godliness, holiness, to save people's souls, etc, and the environment having to do with the physical. It is good because we used to say cleanliness is next to godliness, and what we may be saying now is more of original thoughts not anything from books. What I may say is that it is like somebody waking up and saying, "hey why haven't I thought of this before" (Q11).

EVIL
CULTURES
AND
CHURCH'S
POSITIVE
ROLE

Yes indeed the ancestors had covenants with the spirits with taboos and sanctions placed to guard such. But some of those taboos were actually inhuman in their operation. For example women who gave birth to twins were held to have committed a sacrilege which demanded that the twins would be killed and their 'erring' mother sanctioned. But this kind of law was actually against natural justice and God's law as we understand it as Christians because it led to the loss of innocent lives and the ostracizing of members of society.

Contrary to certain negative views regarding the advent of Christianity I think the church has done a lot to repair some of those negative legacies of the past. For example they have abolished the killing of twins, human sacrifice, illiteracy, etc. The church having corrected these anomalies has averted the calamity that would have ensued from continuing in them. So the contrary is the case with regards to some of these held beliefs of the role of Christianity. The church is for the betterment of the society not the contrary [Q7].

DRAWBACK
OF
URBANISATION

Urbanisation is one of the major factors working against the function of the traditional ways of doing things. When I grew up, the village was a place that was still traditional. The streets were swept and kept neat, and it was so lovely you won't want to live anywhere else in the world. Those things are no more because people are no longer in the villages they have all moved to the cities. So there is no life in the villages any more, the people will rather remain in the cities [Q8].

TRAINING: We have not had any kind of training for our pastors in this regard. In fact I feel ashamed as I talk to you. Our concern as pastors in the field appears to have been to fit people to go to heaven.

Climate Change and Global warming – GOD (and the Church) is the HOPE

In the face of the current global crisis it is God that is the hope of mankind. Concerning climate change, global warming etc only indicate that the earth is increasingly becoming inhospitable, and indicate the need for people to turn back to God. [Q13]

'We are carried away by our pecuniary tendencies to acquire wealth' [Q3].

'The church has a role to play in all this things. We can even

'Quite a number of people are there to work in the name of God to help society.

There is the current debate on conflict resolution which

K39 Prof Samson Akama

engage in village beautification. This can possibly be taken as a form of evangelism and I think it will be very fruitful to the church' [Q2].

If these things are spelt out, in the name of evangelism, helping society and making the church to have an impact on government and the entire society, there are people who are ready to help no matter their station or status. But because no church has started it people can hardly know the extent to which the church can go to resolve this matter. So if the church can set up units in the various denominations just dedicated to the environment the problem can be resolved' [Q5].

the church is not really getting itself involved in. The militants are mostly Christians as statistics show but the church seems to be divorcing itself from the playing such role because it thinks its role is to save souls and not to get involved in things that should be done by government [Q4].

K40 Pastor George Izunwa

Oil Pollution: 'In the oil industry a lot of blame has been put in the multi-nationals, they actually did not start well. Right now they are trying to put things in order but because they did not start well we have a lot of oil spills that were not well managed and gas flaring for years that no one tried to handle and all kinds of degradation in our environment by the oil industry. If you go to the rivers around here you find that all the rivers are black, you won't find any that is brown. Recently I was on a boat going to Bakana and I noticed two things on my skin as we went, one was oil and the other salt caking my skin on my hand and it dawned on me how polluted the water has become. This was a short drive and it means that there is oil pollution caused by the oil industry. [Q1]'

Waste: We don't have a good waste management system and they are trying to build one now but for a city of many millions one is not enough to serve even a tenth of the population. For

the polythene bags and other non-degradable materials there is no system for picking them up [Q2].

CHURCH INACTION: Because people are concentrating on survival talking to them about **ozone layer** and other such things would not make sense to them. They notice that the **climate is changing**, it is obvious as we are about to enter December and you cannot see the usual Harmattan season and the rainfall has continued till now. You may also enter the New Year and in April till May you still have the dry season unlike before and it goes on for longer. So you know the seasons are changing but you don't know how to address that because you don't have a system that can manage that. So that, I think, is why the churches are not really doing much or anything at all. [Q3]

ON RAPTURE THEOLOGY: 'If that is our theology then when we save them we should kill them so that they go straight to heaven and don't stay here. That can't be our theology. Jesus died and told us before He left to 'Occupy till He comes' so we have a divine mandate. To occupy does not mean just to take up space, it means to manage the environment, handle it well, build it up, keep it progressive until He returns. So, our job is to mobilize people to manage the earth well while we are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ. I think that should be a better approach to theology than that' [Q4]

'But even if the earth is going to be destroyed if you are living in a house that is marked for demolition, as long as you are in that building you want it neat and tidy. You don't say that because this house is to be demolished you won't flush the toilet and stay there for five weeks with a stinking toilet, floors not vacuumed and sheets not changed. Common sense will tell you that while you are still in the building though marked for demolition you must keep it tidy and usable until you have to move. So even though we believe for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ we have to keep the earth neat and tidy until He comes [Q5].

K41 Prof Kimse Okoko (former President of Ijaw National Congress) **ON CHURCH ACTION:** Generally I think the Church has failed in Nigeria, especially when you compared it with what the Church did in the US where it became the vanguard for the oppressed black population in the US. You'll see that that is completely absent in Nigeria. It is the same with the case of the Niger Delta. It is true that some of the leaders of the church have spoken against the ills of the society but not in any coherent or consistent manner. When they speak they do in terms of relating the needs and the ills of the society from the point of view of salvation...by putting fear in the minds of their members about hell and heaven, thus creating the passive atmosphere in the ND. The members are concerned with the saving of their souls. [Q1]

ON CHURCH CORRUPTION: The fundamental problem of Christianity is that they are business concerns. And businesses owners do not protest. The US church played a key role in the face of oppression during the time of Martin L King Jr. They changed the landscape of the US as it is today, even with Obama as president in the midst of the current day urge.

You cannot see the above scenario in Nigeria. Rather the people are following after miracles and material gains, etc. When people are pursuing material things, what time do they have to reflect and want to go on strike? Churches have ceased to be the houses of prayer but of business, and that is the tragedy of the churches.

There is no section of the Nigerian society that one can look up to for salvation/change. At least if the Church had not contaminated itself it would have stood out if only as the only section to challenge what is happening. Rather priests and pastors will tell [prophesy to] the President that he will succeed. So there is no hope for the country. The entire society has been bedevilled. Nigeria is so bad that I don't see any change. [Q2]

NO ADVOCACY: I have never heard of any church marching in the streets of Port Harcourt to protest the evil done against the ND, never. What is the church there for, to exploit, etc. They have never criticized the corruption, injustice, etc – no, it is not their message. They have succeeded because it is easy to manipulate the illiterate minds. The real essence of Christianity is gone. The fight against injustice which is part of Christianity is no more, nobody cares. Everyone is waiting for miracles, the blind see, etc. The more miracle the more mesmerized the people are. I said something about Liberation Theology in the House of Commons. I asked the UK [church] leaders to ask their counterparts in Nigeria to play the role of advocates. That is a fundamental flaw in Nigeria's Christianity - their eye is in making money. I challenge churches to point to any time they protested against evil. [Q3]

K42	Prof E J Alagoa	ON CHURCH INFLUENCE: ‘The churches should reach out. They have the structures and will be more effective and will give a great boost to the type of movement they should have and I think it is a great idea. Your work will promote it and produce the evidence they need to back it [Q1]’.
	AWARENESS	AWARENESS IN THE CHURCH: Leaders of the church need to become more aware and have more knowledge. If they themselves get more knowledge and become committed and see the enormity of the problem in a personal direct way then they can begin to give leadership but I believe that they have not yet gotten it at the moment. I don’t really see the church within Nigeria together engaging in this at the present time which is why I said that I think what you are doing is one of its kind as far as I am aware [Q2].
	COMMUNIQUE	Here the church has not yet taken up a position where they are championing the voiceless, down-trodden and the poor. They make these statements once in a while but the real movement structures that will sustain have not yet been put in place and this environmental thing will be a very good platform on which to start a movement [Q3].
	BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY	In the traditional village environment they establish age groups or associations and they mobilize and clean paths, public areas and other such places. In the city, however they have no such system. We have not yet made the cities proper homes yet. At most you have an association of people from the same village but we do not even know our neighbours well enough. The last I remember is when our transformer broke down and we were not getting power and an engineer wrote us and we met and decide to contribute money to have it repaired and afterwards power was restored so such mobilization can happen. It is not happening sufficiently at the level that it should [Q4].
K43	Archbishop ICO Kattey	<p>POLLUTION: ‘The government says it is making efforts but nobody has felt the impact of this effort. Some years ago they sent experts from Abuja but up till a few weeks ago you can still smell gas in the air. Government should do something to clean it up. People still drop refuse wherever they want to. The sea is polluted and fish are dying because of all the pollution. Even the soil is polluted; almost all the minerals are gone. It is affecting everything.’</p> <p>CHANGING CULTURE: ‘In the past, many years ago, the youth used to clean the compound once a week every Saturday but it is not that way anymore. Women come to church to clean it up but that is all. This idea of imbibing cleanliness is no longer in the people. They need this orientation; people no longer believe that cleanliness is next to Godliness.’ Q2</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: ‘The church should inculcate in the people the idea of cleanliness. Sometimes the church can ask people to do cleaning whether or not it is the Environmental Sanitation day or not just like it is done in the villages. The church should pray also that people will be aware of the need to look after the environmental. It is about environmental education of the people but it had to be from childhood. That will be more effective than training adults. Churches don’t care about this. We don’t teach the children about this.’ Q3</p> <p>SCEPTICISM ABOUT AMNESTY/MILITANCY: ‘When you gather militants into one location there will be problems. They should pay them or give them whatever they ask and let them go so they won’t be gathered together to make plans any longer. The governor of the State did not want this scheme but the Federal Government insisted on it. It is not working out well. We are not even sure they have actually brought out all their arms. By 2011 they will call the militants to be electoral thugs again by the same people offering amnesty and the problem continues. It is just a vicious cycle.’ Q4</p> <p>REHABILITATION OF MILITANTS: ‘We are ready but we can’t just force ourselves into these things. If they write a program and invite us we will play a role. Some of these militants are church members and if they are not their parents are. We can organize services for them in their location and the Word of God will touch them. We can’t push ourselves.’ Q5</p> <p>ON MARTIN LUTHER KING JR: ‘Martin Luther King Jr was not fighting for Christians he was fighting for his race. We cannot fight it in the same manner. We are advocating peace. We are fighting the way we should; we are not to carry placards. We tell them the things we want to.’ [Q6]</p> <p>PRIORITY AND ITS CHALLENGES: ‘We can introduce them as electives. The primary thing is missions and evangelism. The main thing is to preach the Gospel so that people can be saved. They can be there as electives, in this part of the world we are not as fast as that, it has to take a long time before these can be included in the curriculum. Even the lecturers have to be taught by experts and we do not have the experts. Who is going to teach them these things?’ [Q7]</p>

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- K44** Che Ibegwura COMMUNIQUE/CORRUPTION IN THE CHURCH: ‘It not enough they must follow it up with actions like demonstrations. Some of them are living in affluence and you cannot be able to tell the people to practice justice while you in return even dupe the church, riding in limousines while the flocks suffer, collecting money from those that the church should have helped, practicing indulgence, collecting unnecessary levies and all that’ Q1
CORRUPT INFLUENCE FROM GOV’T: ‘And the present religious organisations instead of preaching salvation they preach prosperity that is where the religious organisations are failing. They are finding it difficult to tell the leaders of all these governments that they owe the people justice, rather they romance with them. When they see them doing evil they try to make us believe they are God-given leaders. They go to the government house and offer prayers that can never be accepted by God and when they are coming back they smile to the bank at the expense of their flock.’ Q2
CULTURE CHANGE (From a Marxist perspective): ‘I will summarize it as injustice emanating from the derogation from our communalist system of governance which we inherited naturally. What I saw was that most things in our area, by which I mean community, we existed before Nigeria, was done communally. We respected ourselves and elders and were not slaves to capital. Poverty was minimized, the youth were discipline. The invasion by colonialists rubbished all of this and we are suffering from the by-products of that today. Unless we revert back to that natural principle of being our ‘brother’s keeper’ the struggle must continue until the collective responsibility by all members of the homogenous community is being respected. We also have to defeat the spirit of primitive acquisition of wealth at the expense of others because all these things brought into being antagonistic classes which can never give us peace and which is alien to our system of existence.Q3
- K45** Uloma Sunny-
Cookey POLLUTION: Oil spillage, waste mgt problems. Air pollution from wastes from refineries, from burnt Oil and gas give out acidic fumes that affect people’s lives.
ESCHATOLOGY: It is not necessarily about any prophetic association, but rather a phase that will usher us into something better.
EVANGELISM AND PRACTICAL DAILY LIVING: The bible says you should have a place for good works as a believer, not just to be born again, God is not a dirty God, it is true that cleanliness in next to Godliness.
CLIMATE CHANGE: ‘The climate is no more predictable as it used to be, eg the harmattan is coming a bit earlier than usual, even weather forecasting is not as predictable. It is also about God, and will also usher us into the best’.
Church ACTION: Buy trucks and place bins to help in the clean-up
- K46** Mgsr. Cyprian
Onwuli POLLUTION: ‘my home (Umuechem) which is about 25mins drive from here, that’s even worse because of the oil locations. If you drive through the roads leading to this location you’ll see oil floating with water, really it looks like we are cursed people but we are the one who made things the way they are. It is shameful’
INSECURITY: ‘Let me give you a little information, I as the Sec of CAN in Rivers State know that we have not come out to condemn it. First of all the criminal aspect, the security situation is such that you cannot predict when the crisis erupts or when these young ones will strike, unlike in Northern Nigeria where you will know when the attack is coming. Here there are things you will see and condemn tomorrow you will be taken away.’
CHURCH MOBILISATION: Also we (CAN) tasked ourselves to lead exemplary lives and to task Christians in the various churches not to take part in this militancy. Of course we are not supporting the gov’t because they created the problem we are facing today.
PROPAGANDA: That’s the problem in the ND, Shell will support them (gov’t), and will carry propaganda against you. For example in my community Shell said they had built kilometres of road, provided pipe borne water, etc, but when I brought an NGO from Germany and Britain it was proven to be all lies. It was a big risk for them to come. The gov’t will use its power to tell lies against you that no one will even believe you because you won’t have that access to the media. It took Saro-wiwa a long time, but it was after he died that the real news started getting out.
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Appendix Three: PCS&D Model of Behaviour Change Communication

PCS&D MODEL of Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaign

STAGE 1: ADVOCACY WITH GATE KEEPERS

Behaviour change takes place both at community and individual levels. The idea of behavior change must first be accepted by local leaders before the programme starts. Key gate keepers include leaders of the Local Government Council – Chairman, Secretary, Head of Service and Heads of Departments. They are first sensitized and convinced about the problem that requires behavior change. Then a possible solution which the project seeks to provide is sold to them. The project is taken further down when the LGA gate keepers buy into the solution.

STAGE 2: COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Community Gate keepers and Community opinion leaders are behavior change catalysts within the community. A community dialogue must first be held among them to convince them that a problem exists that requires behavior change. This is done at a community dialogue with them. The target audience for the community dialogue includes the traditional ruler and his cabinet, the leaders of the Community Development Union, leaders of the age grades, heads of the compounds, women leaders and some other prominent people within the community. A solution(s) is/are suggested for their input or modification. Once they buy into the suggested solution – the desired behavior – the stage is set for the next stage.

STAGE 3: COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

At this stage peer educators are trained to motivate their peers to change the identified harmful behavior. The peer education is done at individual and small group levels. This is reinforced with rallies and distribution of mass media materials such as posters and flex which highlight the benefits of a desirable behavior and call readers to take action towards the desirable behavior.

STAGE 4: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Indicators are developed to monitor and evaluate the BCC project. Process indicators may include the number of LGA gate-keepers (disaggregated by sexes) sensitized to

buy into the project; the number of community gate keepers and opinion leaders (disaggregated into sexes) sensitized to buy into the project; the number of peer educators (disaggregated into sexes) trained; the number of people (disaggregated into sexes) motivated to change behavior by peer educators; the number of people (disaggregated into sexes) reached during rally. Outcome indicators may include the percentage of people (disaggregated into sexes) over baseline, who actually change their behavior to the desirable one. The impact indicator will be the percentage of people (disaggregated into sexes) over baseline of people who now suffer the consequences of the harmful behavior.

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Primary Source: Oral Source

Contributors

	Respondent	Profile
A1	Elder Mrs Ade Ango (WG)	Retired School Principal, church elder and member of Mary Slessor PCN
A2	Mr India Ume (MCA)	Surveyor and Youth member of Mary Slessor PCN
A3	Sabo Panti (Youth)	Youth member of Mary Slessor PCN
A4	Mr Chike Job (Youth)	Church caretaker and youth member of Mary Slessor PCN
B5	Elder Mrs Ugochi Nnam (WG)	Trader and church elder of Diobu Parish
B6	Miss Chiamaka Ukia (Youth)	Trader and youth member of Diobu Parish
B7	Mr Henry Ogbo (MCA)	Church caretaker and member of Diobu Parish
C8	Marge Oba (WG)	Housewife and member of Rumuomasi Church
C9	Elder Omo Omoba (MCA)	Church lay leader and elder of Rumuomasi Church
C10	Dr Chika Nkire (MCA)	Medical doctor and member of Rumuomasi Church
C11	Annette Udom (Youth)	Graduate and youth member of Rumuomasi Church
C12	Mrs Uga Ogbo (WG)	Housewife and member of Rumuomasi Church
C13	Ere Oba (MCA)	Member of Rumuomasi Church
D14	Miss Nnem Wetalu (Youth)	Student and youth member Eleme PCN
D15	Mrs Felicia Ogbo (WG)	Housewife, seamstress and member Eleme PCN
D16	Mr Ikere Orjiako (Youth)	Church caretaker and youth member Eleme PCN
D17	Rev Dr Chim Wetalu (MCA)	Retired PCN minister and member, Eleme PCN
E18	Mr Festus Karl (MCA)	Trader and member, Bori PCN

E19	Mr Yelga Egba (MCA)	Trader and native member, Bori PCN
E20	Mr Endurance Comfort (Youth)	Young graduate and native member, Bori PCN
F21	Mrs Charity Ogan (WG)	Housewife and member Bodo City PCN
F22	Mr Vincent Zam (MCA)	Fisherman and Church elder at Bodo City PCN
G23	Elder Mrs Chika Uka (WG)	Church elder at Woji Parish
G24	Barrister Andrew Apple (MCA)	Lawyer and member of Woji Parish
G25	Engr. Chi Nedu (MCA)	Oil worker and member of Woji Parish
G26	Barrister Edward Iniobong (MCA)	Lawyer, oil worker, and member of Woji Parish
G27	Rev Bona Ndikor	PCN minister at Woji Parish (then)
H28	Mr Ifendu Imogen (Youth)	Youth member PCN Oyigbo Parish
H29	Mr Cyprian Onuma	Youth member PCN Oyigbo Parish
H30	Mr Maxwell Alwell	Member PCN Oyigbo Parish
H31	Miss Antoinette Anietie	Youth member PCN Oyigbo Parish
H32	Rev Oscar Alaba	PCN minister at Oyigbo Central
I33	Rev Kalu Ulu Eme	PCN minister and Director of Information and Public Affairs
I34	Rev Okechukwu Iro	PCN minister and Director of Presbyterian Community Services and Development (PCS&D)
J35	Barrister S K Igbara	Lawyer and formerly the National Legal Adviser of MOSOP
K36	Rev Dr Benebo Fubara Fubara-Manuel	PCN minister-theologian, former PCN Principal Clerk. He also was the Chairman of the Rivers State chapter of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), a network of mainline churches with reformed tradition, including the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches.
K37	Rev Nnimmo Bassey	Environmental activist, Christian minister, and international Chair of Friends of the Earth
K38	Rev Dr Paul O. Ajah	Rev Professor Paul Ojukwu Ajah was at time of the interview in 2009 the President of the Assemblies of God owned Pentecostal School of

		Theology
K39	Prof Samson Akama	University don and former President Isoko Progressive Union
K40	Pastor George Izunwa	Senior Pastor, Gateway International Church
K41	Prof Kimse Okoko	University don and former President of Ijaw National Council (INC)
K42	Prof EJ Alagoa	Retired professor of history
K43	Archbishop Ignatius CO Kattey	Prominent Church Leader
K44	Che Ibegwura	Community Leader and environmental Activist
K45	Pastor (Mrs) Uloma Sunny Cooney	Assistant General Overseer of Lifegate Church
K46	Cyprian Onwunli	Monsignor Onwunli was at the time the Dean of the Port Harcourt Catholic Diocese, and the Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Rivers State. He also served as the Chaplain of the Rivers State Government House chapel
K47	Kingsley Chinda	Commissioner for the Environment, Rivers State

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