

Policy Brief and Advocacy Asks on Clean-Up of Niger Delta and Ogoni Land.

Background and Context

Since 1956 when crude oil was discovered in commercial quantities and Nigeria began its export two years later, billions of dollars have been generated by the Nigeria government and multinational oil companies. From a modest production capacity of 5,100 barrels per day, Nigeria systematically grew its crude oil output with the discovery and exploitation of additional oilfields, to 2.6 million barrels per day at a point. While Nigeria became a major oil power, at a time ranking 6th in global crude oil outputs, the indigenous people of the Niger Delta where all of Nigeria's crude oil and gas is generated- over 40 million of them- became poorer, partly as a result of hydrocarbon extraction. It is currently estimated that there are over 800 'oil-producing communities' with over 900 active oil wells¹ and thousands of other oil production facilities in the Niger Delta. Nigeria relies on oil and gas for up to 90% of export income and 75% of all government revenues. Since the late 1950s, oil and gas have been the key export of Nigeria, dwarfing other sectors in scale of government earnings.

From the start, oil extraction has been carried out recklessly, far below any acceptable global standard, causing routine and widespread pollution. The transportation of crude oil and finished products from various points of extraction to desired destinations requires that massive lengths of pipes are buried beneath the lands, swamps and rivers of the Niger Delta. On several occasions, due to age, corrosion or tampering as a result of poor security, the pipes rupture releasing oil that pollute farmlands and water bodies, leaving a trail of a destroyed ecosystem, wildlife, aquatic life and livelihoods. Oil spills in the Niger Delta are more regular than normal. For instance, between 2018-2019, there were 1,300 recorded oil spills, amounting to an average of 5 oil spills a day, according to data by the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency². Reliable estimates have it that an average of 240,000 barrels of crude oil are spilled in the Niger Delta each year³. This is over 14 million litres of crude oil or the equivalent of 429 fully loaded oil tankers dumped into the rivers, lands and swamps of the Niger Delta. It takes only 3.7 litres of oil to contaminate approximately 3.7 million litres of water⁴.

The Cost of Hydrocarbon Extraction: Pollution, Livelihoods and Wellbeing

¹ Amarachi, P. O., & Kabari, S. (2020). A review of the threat of oil exploitation to mangrove ecosystem: Insights from Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Global Ecology and Conservation*. 22(e00961). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989419306729#bib17>

² Ayodeji, A. (2020, June 8). NOSDRA: Nigeria records 1,300 oil spills in two years. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/396658-nosdra-nigeria-records-1300-oil-spills-in-two-years.html>

³ Ordinioha, B., & Brisibe, S. (2013). The human health implications of crude oil spills in the Niger Delta. *National Library of medicine*. 54(1). [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3644738/#:~:text=An%20average%20of%20240%2C000%20barrels,and%20mechanical%20failure%20\(17.04%25\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3644738/#:~:text=An%20average%20of%20240%2C000%20barrels,and%20mechanical%20failure%20(17.04%25))

⁴ Minnesota Rural Water Association. *A spill of only one gallon of oil can contaminate a million gallons of water*. <https://www.mrwa.com/SWP/Brochures/WebAbovegroundStorageTanktrifoldBr.pdf>

Pollution caused by oil spills contaminate farms and rivers, disrupting the two key livelihood activities of the people of the Niger Delta region. When spills occur, fishes and other aquatic species die. Mangroves which are the breeding territories of aquatic life also wither and die, impacting heavily on the livelihood of fisherfolks. The same devastating losses occur when the spills happen on farmlands.

Another harmful fallout of crude oil extraction in the Niger Delta is the economically wasteful and environmentally hazardous practice of gas flaring. Of the 3.5 billion cubic feet of associated gas estimated to be produced annually in Nigeria, 2.5 billion cubic feet (or 70%) is burnt off in gas flares⁵. In the four-year period between 2020 and 2024, Nigeria flared gas valued at \$1.9bn.⁶

While gas flaring is not a necessary by product of crude oil extraction, the practice was adopted by Shell as standard procedure for handling associated gas from extraction in Niger Delta oilfields, even when as far back as 1960, the British colonial authorities recognized that flaring in oil production sites was problematic⁷. Gas flaring continues in Nigeria till date because it is cheaper and more convenient for oil companies to do so. In 2023, Nigeria ranked 8th in the list of gas flaring nations. In the following year, Shell reported that 50% of its global gas flaring was done in Nigeria⁸. Reputable studies have established that methane, carbon dioxide and other chemicals from flared gas results in poisoning as well as other severe illnesses⁹ including cancer and respiratory conditions. Niger Delta communities are exposed to adverse health impacts and loss of livelihoods from flaring. When flared gases return from the atmosphere as rain, they become acidic, poisoning crops and water bodies, and resulting in decreased agriculture and fishing yields, and causing health harms.

A recent scientific assessment conducted in Otuabagi community in Bayelsa state on 80 randomly selected female community members found that all of them had very alarming levels of petroleum in their blood¹⁰. The assessment also found that crops and water had poisonous levels of hydrocarbons.

In 2023, the Bayelsa State Oil and Environmental Commission (BSOEC) established in March 2019 released its findings on the impacts of hydrocarbon pollution on the Niger Delta state in a

⁵ Vanguard Newspaper. (2020, June 8). *Gas flaring, another threat*. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/06/gas-flaring-another-threat/>

⁶ Dare O. (2024, February 8). Nigeria flared \$2bn gas in 2 years— report. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/nigeria-flared-2bn-gas-in-four-years-report/>

⁷ Eneji, M. A., Eneji, A.I., Haruna, H., Salisu, J. K., Abdulahi, G. M. (2020). Gas flaring Environmental Degradation and Economic Growth in Nigeria. *Sumerianz Journal of Business Management and Marketing*. 3(6), 56-66. [https://www.sumerianz.com/pdf-files/sibmm3\(6\)56-66.pdf](https://www.sumerianz.com/pdf-files/sibmm3(6)56-66.pdf)

⁸ Shell Plc. (2024). *Energy transition strategy 2024*. https://www.shell.com/sustainability/our-climate-target/shell-energy-transition-strategy/_jcr_content/root/main/section/promo_copy_copy/links/item0.stream/1726832326846/2c3f9065f2886e789ac196789f137dbca49473e8/shell-energy-transition-strategy-2024.pdf

⁹ Omoniyi, B. A., & John, G. (2022). The impact of gas flaring on child health in Nigeria. *Policy Research Working Paper*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099237508302236581/pdf/IDU0af7dd3f1075cb04fed0a71e0b3a08fb54368.pdf>

¹⁰ Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre. (2024). *Impact of oil extraction on women's health in Bayelsa*. <https://www.kebetkachewomencentre.com/impact-of-oil-extraction-on-women>

report titled **An Environmental Genocide: The Human and Environmental Cost of Big Oil in Bayelsa, Nigeria**. This outcome was based on an assessment of the amount of hydrocarbon contamination of soil, water and air as well as in species in the food chain seen across Bayelsa. It also set out to determine the health impacts of pollution on the people based on the collection and analysis of blood samples taken from over 1,600 people in the state by a team of public health professionals. The report also relied on surveys by forensic scientists, oil spill data publicly available and testimonies from communities.

The report highlights irrefutable evidence of alarming levels of hydrocarbon pollution in Bayelsa state, as well as astonishing impacts on lives and livelihoods. It provides evidence *‘that toxins from oil pollution are present at often dangerous levels across the state and have infiltrated the food chain, ending up in the bloodstreams of those tested in affected communities’*. According to the report, in some study locations, *‘highly toxic oil-related contaminants such as chromium are present in groundwater at over 1,000 times the WHO limit, while in others, concentrations of noxious chemicals, such as Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons, exceed safe levels by a factor of 1 million according to some of the samples taken’*. While the assessment focused on Bayelsa state in particular, it is generally known that pollution is similar or even worse in other parts of the Niger Delta.

Overwhelming evidence from interactions with members of Niger Delta communities and scientific assessments of the natural environment and health of the people show that the region has undergone ecocide on account of the exploitation of crude oil and gas. Ecocide refers to *‘unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.’*¹¹ The relentless hydrocarbon pollution in the region is the key reason that life expectancy in the Niger Delta is 41 years, when it is 54 years in other parts of the country¹².

Ogoniland and Oil Extraction

Ogoni is an ethnic nationality in Rivers state occupying 4 local government areas namely Khana, Gokana, Tai, and Eleme. Before the advent of hydrocarbon extraction, the Ogoni area was characterized by lush mangrove forests, tropical climate, vast network of rivers and streams, and fertile soil supporting robust livelihoods in farming and fishing which the people traditionally rely on for their existence. Crops such as yams, cassava, and plantains are staples of their agricultural

¹¹ Stop Ecocide International (2021). *June 2021: Historic moment as independent panel launches definition of ecocide*. <https://www.stopecocide.earth/legal-definition>

¹² Ekpali, S. (2022, December 21). *Timeline: Half a Century of oil spills in Nigeria's Ogoniland*. Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/21/timeline-oil-spills-in-nigerias-ogoniland#:~:text=Those%20who%20depend%20on%20farming,Ogoniland%2C%20from%201958%20to%20date>

practices. Fishing, a key occupation, is supported by the numerous rivers and creeks that traverse the area.

With the exploitation and subsequent exportation of oil in 1958, Ogoniland had already emerged as a focal area within Nigeria's burgeoning oil sector, significantly enhancing the nation's economic landscape. However, the benefits derived from oil resources were predominantly reaped by the federal government and international oil corporations, while the Ogoni communities bore the consequences of the industry's adverse impacts.

In 1970, Ogoniland witnessed Nigeria's first major oil spill arising from an error by Shell¹³. A blow-out at the Bomu oilfield released crude oil nonstop for three weeks resulting in massive pollution and destruction of livelihoods. Ensuing from this incident, the Ogoni nationality registered its first recorded protestation against oil extraction activities. Chiefs and leaders from the area endorsed a petition to the Nigerian government complaining that Shell, was “*seriously threatening the well-being, and even the very lives*” of the Ogoni people.¹⁴ Since then, oil spills and blowouts have been a regular occurrence in Ogoniland. It is estimated that in the 15-year period between 1976 and 1991, there were 2,976 separate oil spills that released over two million barrels of crude oil in Ogoniland¹⁵.

Concerned with the despoilation of their environment by oil extraction activities and its nexus with the growing poverty of Ogoni people, Ogoni Chiefs and people met in 1990 and adopted the Ogoni Bill of Rights, a landmark document demanding the right of the Ogoni people to protect their environment and ecology from further degradation. The Bill describes the Ogoni case as a ‘*genocide being committed in the dying years of the twentieth century by multi-national oil companies under the supervision of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*’¹⁶ The Bill further demanded that the Ogoni people should have political and economic control of their affairs and resources and should have adequate and direct representation in Nigerian national institutions.

Coordinated under the banner of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ogonis organized a series of peaceful protests against Shell and the Nigerian government and called international attention to the plight of the people. The demands contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights and presented to the Nigerian government were largely ignored. The decision of the

¹³ Ogechi O. (2023). Oil among the mangrove trees: a portrait of destruction in the Niger Delta, then and now. *Harvard International Review*. <https://hir.harvard.edu/oil-among-the-mangrove-trees-a-portrait-of-destruction-in-the-niger-delta-then-and-now/#:~:text=In%201970%2C%20Ogoniland%2C%20located%20in,pound%20fine%20by%20Nigerian%20courts.>

¹⁴ Platform London. *The Ogoni Struggle*. <https://platformlondon.org/background/the-ogoni-struggle/>?

¹⁵ Friends of the Earth International. (2019). *A journey through the oil spills of Ogoniland*. <https://www.foei.org/a-journey-through-the-oil-spills-of-ogoniland/#:~:text=Between%201976%20and%201991%2C%20over,the%20land%2C%20creeks%20and%20waterways>

¹⁶ Ogoni Bill of Rights. (1990). Saros International Publishers. <https://bebor.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Ogoni-Bill-of-Rights.pdf>

Nigerian military government to disregard the concerns of the people forced the movement to adopt more assertive non-violent mass actions. The most notable was a mass protest involving over 300,000 Ogonis that eventually led to Shell suspending oil production from Ogoniland in 1993.

The response of the Nigeria government was both brutal and decisive. MOSOP was viciously repressed using the Nigerian military. Responding to complaints by Shell about the disruption of their operations, the Military Administrator of Rivers State Colonel Musa Komo set up an ad hoc military unit, named the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force comprising of personnel from the Nigeria Army, Police, Air Force and Navy, and commanded by Army Major Paul Okuntimo. The task force was assigned the duty of crushing the ‘disturbances’.

The task force immediately became complicit in human rights abuses. On 21 February 1994, soldiers of the unit shot at thousands of peaceful demonstrators outside Shell’s compound.¹⁷ Overtime, at least 800 Ogonis were extrajudicially murdered by the Taskforce, while thousands more were tortured, raped, detained and exiled. Till this day, some Ogonis who fled their ancestral home remain in exile, too traumatized to return.

In May 1994, capitalizing on the unfortunate killing of 4 prominent Ogoni leaders by a mob of yet to be identified persons in Gokana local government area, Ken Saro Wiwa and other leaders of MOSOP were arrested and detained. Before formal charges were brought against the suspects, Major Paul Okuntimo had reportedly declared that they were guilty of murder.

After a period of trial by a handpicked special military tribunal, a sentence of death was pronounced on Ken Saro Wiwa, Saturday Dobe, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuine, on October 31, 1995. These Ogoni nine were executed on November 10, 1995, while prominent world leaders appealed to the Nigerian military dictatorship to halt the execution. Their lawyers were still preparing their appeal when their hanging was announced.

Despite their vociferous protestations, Ogoniland has continued to experience oil spills. Between 1993 and 2022, there have been at least 10 notable oil spills in Ogoniland¹⁸, each causing tremendous harm.

United Nations Environment Programme Report on Ogoniland

¹⁷ Amnesty International. (2017). *Was Shell complicit in murder?* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/was-shell-complicit-in-murder/>

¹⁸ Ekpali, S. (2022, December 21). *Timeline: Half a Century of oil spills in Nigeria's Ogoniland.* Aljazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/21/timeline-oil-spills-in-nigerias-ogoniland>

In 2009, following widespread concerns over the degradation of the Ogoni environment on account of oil spills, the Nigerian government requested the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) to conduct an assessment of the impact of contamination from oil across the Ogoniland. UNEP published its findings in August 2011. The assessment report provided compelling evidence of ecocide. It revealed massive soil and water contamination in Ogoniland, which had significantly compromised sources of livelihood and was slowly poisoning inhabitants of the area. So alarmed was UNEP about the findings that it recommended that populations of the area immediately stop using water from all sources in the identified sites, while the government immediately commences a clean-up exercise which could take up to thirty years, and amount to the biggest soil and water remediation ever embarked on. UNEP estimated the clean-up of Ogoniland alone would take an investment of \$1 billion. The report exposed the repeated failures of oil companies to clean up spills – sites supposedly remediated by Shell were found to still be heavily contaminated.

The UNEP report advocated for the creation of an Environmental Restoration Fund for Ogoniland or an Ogoni Restoration Fund with a commencement capital of \$1 billion to be funded through contributions by Shell and its joint venture partners, the Federal Government of Nigeria, and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation.

Responding to the report and the corresponding public pressure, the federal government inaugurated a Presidential Implementation Committee under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Petroleum Resources to review and make recommendations on the Implementation of the UNEP Report. The Committee in 2012 recommended the creation of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project under the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, to develop and initiate work programmes aimed at restoring Ogoniland and other impacted host communities.

It is important to note that the mandate of HYPREP included the evaluation of *'all hydrocarbon polluted communities and sites in Nigeria and make recommendation to the Federal Government'*, as well as *'restore communities and sites impacted by Hydrocarbon Pollution in Nigeria'*.¹⁹

However, civil society organizations expressed concern over the nomenclature of the agency, especially the misleading phrase *'petroleum restoration'*, as well as the seeming lack of commitment of the government to intensively drive the cleanup. Two years into its creation, the agency began to suffer poor management and funding. It was reported that it owed staff salaries in excess of 30 months, and the leadership was grossly inefficient.

In June 2016, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari relaunched HYPREP at an elaborate flag-off ceremony in Ogoniland. The agency was renamed Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project, with the word *'restoration'* deliberately removed from the name. The agency was also moved from the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and embedded in the Federal Ministry of Environment where it more appropriately belongs.

¹⁹ The Establishment of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Unit, Ministry of Petroleum Resources Notice, 2014 <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/ng/2014/ng-government-gazette-dated-2014-07-18-no-65.pdf>

Delivery of Remediation by HYPREP

Shell and its joint venture partners including the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation provided an initial \$10 million take-off fund for the commencement of the clean-up exercise. The SPDC Joint Venture partnership further committed \$180 million to the project in 2018, another \$180 million in 2019 and \$212 million in 2022, amounting to \$572 million or 64% of the pledged amount.

The performance of HYPREP since its creation has been marked by mixed feelings. Members of Ogoni communities score the intervention low with regards to cleaning contaminated sites and providing the recommended emergency measures.

However, as part of the restoration efforts, HYPREP has initiated extensive shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration activities in several Ogoni communities, including B-Dere, K-Dere, Kpor, Goi, and Bomu in Gokana local government Area. This involves removing hydrocarbon pollutants from affected shorelines and replanting mangroves to restore the ecosystem. Beyond environmental remediation, the intervention has also carried out critical development projects, including the provision of potable water, healthcare services, and agricultural support to improve the livelihoods of the Ogoni people.

In keeping with the recommendations of UNEP, HYPREP has also embarked on the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration with an Integrated Contaminated Soil Management Centre (ICSMC). Currently, construction work is at 70% completion. When completed, it is expected that the center will run training courses in environmental monitoring and restoration, promote learning in environmental restoration in the region and more widely, and become a model for environmental restoration²⁰.

While there has been noticeable advancement in certain areas related to the clean-up initiative, the effectiveness of hydrocarbon removal from contaminated locations remains uncertain.

The clean-up exercise has been plagued by controversies and accusations. For instance, investigation findings indicate that several locations which HYPREP claimed were cleaned are still unable to grow crops, indicating that the remediation may have not been done, or done in a shoddy manner.²¹ Journalists investigations also indicate that some contractors selected for clean-up operations lacked relevant experience, leading to ineffective remediation efforts. In other instances, clean-up contracts were awarded to non-existent companies in contravention of

²⁰ Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project. <https://hyprep.gov.ng/center-of-excellence/>

²¹ <https://dataphyte.com/latest-reports/development/from-contract-scams-to-polluted-water-how-hypreps-1bn-fund-failed-to-provide-respite-to-ogoni-people/>

Nigeria's Public Procurement Act. Some sites that HYPREP reported had been cleaned, were never attended to.

Confidential communications including investigations, emails, letters to Nigerian ministers and minutes from meetings reveal that senior U.N. officials *'were increasingly concerned that the Nigerian agency in charge of cleaning up crude oil spills has been a "total failure."*'²²

There are also widespread challenges over the financial accountability of HYPREP. The account of the agency had not been audited since it was created up till at least 2021. In that year, UNEP representatives warned the Nigerian government that spending by HYPREP was not being tracked, while internal auditors were mostly viewed suspiciously and physically prevented from assessing project locations. While the current leadership of HYPREP says that reforms have been carried out, concerns over the use of resources and value for money persists. In January 2025, a Senate panel threatened to issue an order for the arrest of the HYPREP project coordinator for failing to honor 7 previous invitations to render *'detailed breakdown of how the allocated funds have been spent.'*²³

The administration of HYPREP has also been plagued with political interference. For instance, there have been allegations that many clean-up contracts were awarded to companies owned by politicians, leading to conflicts of interest and substandard remediation outputs. The tenure of leadership in HYPREP also poses a significant concern. The body has had six chairpersons of the governing council in a period of seven years,²⁴ a development that has seriously impacted the capacity of the body to perform.

In July 2024, President Tinubu unilaterally sacked the HYPREP project coordinator without reference to the statutory 4-year tenure of the office, and appointed Mr. Olufemi Adekanmbi, a former commissioner for special duties, culture, and tourism in Ondo State as new project coordinator²⁵. While the decision was reversed days after, it nonetheless demonstrates the level of interference disrupting the operations of HYPREP.

Cleanup Versus Resumption of Oil Extraction

²² Odinaka, A. (2023). *From contract to polluted water: how Hyprep's \$1bn fund failed to provide respite to Ogoni People*. Dataphyte. <https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-niger-delta-oil-spill-cleanup-hyprep-8c7533ad31d1aad5c0e3933a41891579>

²³ Abdulqudus, O., (2025, January 29). Senate Panel threatens arrest warrant against HYPREP coordinator over Ogoniland cleanup funds. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/770263-senate-panel-threatens-arrest-warrant-against-hyprep-coordinator-over-ogoniland-cleanup-funds.html>

²⁴ Dennis, Naku (2023, January 10) Political interference in HYPREP delaying Ogoni clean up– Ex-MOSOSP President. *Punch Nigeria*. <https://punchng.com/political-interference-in-hyprep-delaying-ogoni-clean-up-ex-mosop-president/>

²⁵ Chinagorom, U., (2024, July 15). After criticism, Tinubu reinstates Zabbey as HYPREP coordinator. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/713695-after-criticism-tinubu-reinstates-zabbey-as-hyprep-coordinator.html?tztc=1>

Since at least 2019, the Nigerian government has been making efforts to resume oil extraction in OML 11 located in Ogoniland which was halted in 1993. A memo dated March 1, 2019, reportedly originating from the Presidency and addressed to the Group Managing Director of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation and signed by Chief of Staff to the President, Mr. Abba Kyari, with reference number SH/COS/24/A/8540, directed the NNPC, and NPDC to take over OML 11 from Shell Petroleum Development Company. *“NNPC/NPDC to take over the operatorship, from Shell Petroleum Development Company, of the entire OML 11 not later than 30 April 2019 and ensure smooth re-entry given the delicate situation in Ogoni Land”*. The memo goes further to instruct *“NNPC/NPDC to confirm by May 2, 2019, the assumption of the operatorship.”*

Again, in January 2025, President Bola Tinubu in a meeting with select Ogoni leaders, officials of the Rivers state government and key members of his administration including the National Security Adviser, proposed the resumption of oil extraction in Ogoniland. Understandably, this proposal has sparked critical debates on the desirability of a new phase of crude oil mining in the area, especially in the absence of closure over the event of the 1990s, and while the cleaning of contaminated sites are ongoing. Civil society organizations have expressed concern with the prospect of continuing with the clean-up efforts while at the same time resuming full scale extraction activities with all the pollution that comes with it. Concern has also been expressed about the manner the Presidency has approached the subject- as a purely economic decision without taking note of the socio-historical realities around oil extraction in Ogoniland. This move is not only capable of threatening the fragile peace in the area but also undermining the broader efforts at environmental remediation.

Conclusion

Funding Nigeria and the states of the federation with proceeds from crude oil and gas sales has bequeathed an extensive history of social injustice, deprivation, poverty and ecological destruction. It has transformed a once vibrant area to an ecological wasteland; and made its people insecure, impoverished and poisoned. Fixing the Niger Delta must be deliberate. It has to be done with the consciousness that accounting for the mess of oil extraction goes beyond just removing hydrocarbons from lands, rivers and the air. It is a first step to attaining full social, economic and ecological restoration. Accountability in this regard includes holding entities responsible for ecocide in the Niger Delta to account. With multinational oil companies frantically divesting from the region, the prospect of doing so is increasingly remote.

In the search for accountability, Ogoniland is far ahead of the rest of the Niger Delta. What happens in the area will largely determine what happens in the rest of the region. A failure of the clean-up efforts, or the resumption of oil extraction, or even a relapse to insecurity, will portend dangers for the larger Niger Delta's quest for accountability.

Recommendations

1. **Accelerate the Ogoni Clean-up:** Currently, the clean-up of Ogoniland as recommended by UNEP has left gaps that could derail the process and lead to its ultimate failure. It is critical that stricter oversight structures be placed on all aspects of the exercise. This include in the prequalification of contractors, quality control of the actual remediation, value for money and appropriate oversights.
2. **Address Historical Abuses:** Several concerns around ecological and social justice in Ogoniland have been neglected. The world recognizes that the people of Ogoni have suffered unprecedented pains and loses on account of oil extraction. No apology has been rendered for the destruction of their environment, the killing of their people, the loss of their livelihoods, the destruction of their villages, the forced exile of their people and the murder of their leaders. To assume that the extraction of oil can commence whilst these issues remain on the front burner, is to be naïve at best and cruel at worse. It is recommended that the government immediately puts structures in place to bring justice and closure to the countless victims of the oil induced conflict that devastated the community in the 1990s.
3. **Halt Resumption of Oil Extraction in Ogoniland:** It is recommended that the government puts a stop to any planned attempt to resume oil activities in Ogoniland, and rather concentrate on redeeming the ecological disaster in the area, decommissioning aged oil infrastructure, replacing the lost livelihood of the people and securing justice for the countless Ogonis waiting for closure.
4. **Addressing Pollution in the Wider Niger Delta:** It is recommended that the Presidency issue an Executive Order creating a Niger Delta Environmental Remediation Programme and Trust Fund. This can be either independent of or domiciled in the extant Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) currently overseeing the cleanup of Ogoni Land, but with a separate Trust Fund from the Ogoni Trust Fund, an expanded Governing Council and an unimpeachable Management system designed to avoid the contradictions that have historically bedeviled HYPREP and the debatable progress of the Ogoni Cleanup. The tasks of the Programme would include a definitive health audit besides the standard environmental audit of impacted areas.
5. **Adoption of the National Principles on Divestment and Decommissioning in the Nigerian Oil Industry:** The document lays out strategies and guidelines adopted and compiled by a wide coalition of community, civil society and international organizations, for divestment and decommissioning, following extensive field missions and engagements in the Niger Delta. It is recommended that this document be domesticated as procedural guide to access all divestment moves and decommissioning by exiting oil companies in the Niger Delta.