

**RISK SOCIETY
AND THE
CULTURE OF
PRECAUTION**

**EDITED BY INGO K. RICHTER,
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Risk Society and the Culture of Precaution

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The Case of Oil Exploitation in Nigeria

E. Remi Aiyede

The political economy of oil exploitation in Nigeria

Nigeria was under firm military autocracy and absolutism for close to 29 years after 1966 when the military made their first incursion into the country's government and politics, following the collapse of the first republic. Authoritarian governments were interrupted only by a brief period of civilian rule in the second republic (1979–83) before the return to civil rule in 1999. Indeed, Nigeria's march to constitutional democracy has been a chequered one, marked by anti-colonial struggles, crises, coups, counter-coups and a thirty-month agonizing civil war between 1967 and 1970. Nigeria can be said to be in its sixth political phase in its history as a single political entity, namely:

- The era of colonial autocracy and absolutism, that is, the period of formal colonialism until 1 October, 1960 when the country gained independence.
- The emergence of constitutional democracy between 1960 and 1966.
- The return of military autocracy and absolutism (1966–79).
- The restoration of constitutional democracy (1979–83).
- The second period of military autocracy and absolutism (1983–99).
- The return to constitutional democracy, 29 May 1999 to the present.

Nigeria is composed of over 250 ethno-linguistic groups with three dominant ethnic groupings: Hausa/Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the west and Igbo in the south-east. Naturally, these majority ethnic groups became the dominant players in politics once the British began to grant self-rule to the three regions at independence and have remained so. The untoward implication of these for minority peoples and communities

is very clear from an exploration of the use to which state resources have been put in a contest in which strategic positions of the state (military, political offices, bureaucracy) are filled increasingly, especially from the 1979, according to regional and proportional representation.

Three critical areas are worthy of note. The first is privatization of public office. Politics in Nigeria has been described variously as prebendal, neo-patrimonial, clientelistic or predatory, which means that 'the existing offices of the state may compete for and then be utilised for the personal benefit of office holders as well as their reference or support group' (Joseph, 1987). The second is that majoritarian politics is reflected in policy choices that do not favour the minority oil-producing communities, as is demonstrated in the changes in the revenue allocation formula. Since oil became the major source of revenue, derivation has increasingly become insignificant as a factor of allocation of revenue. The third is the consequential marginalization of oil-producing communities who are largely minorities in terms of development projects and revenue allocation in the struggles between dominant majority groups for power, as the former lost control over oil resources. Thus, the oil communities have had to engage the Nigerian state in an epic but alarming struggle for justice and equity (Joseph 1987; Graf 1988; Obi 1995; Lewis 1997; Aiyede 2002).

To appreciate the significance of oil exploitation to politics and social order in Nigeria, it is important to understand how oil exploitation has become central to resource allocation and distribution in Nigeria.

At independence Nigeria's economy and public revenue were largely derived from the export of agricultural produce such as cocoa, cotton, rubber and groundnuts. As the mainstay of the economy, agricultural produce accounted for 64.1 per cent of national output in 1960. Until 1966 oil accounted for less than 15 per cent of national output even though oil had become the fastest growing sector of the Nigerian economy. In 1970 oil revenue accounted for 58.01 per cent of total exports. Following a growth rate of 13 per cent between 1986 and 1992 it began to account for over 90 per cent of foreign exchange, 70 per cent of budgetary revenue and 25 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the same time annual production of Nigeria's cash crops fell by 43, 29, 65 and 64 per cent respectively between 1970 and 1982. This situation shows quite clearly that the inflow of oil revenues was not used to provide impetus for growth in other sectors. Indeed, the share of agriculture in GDP declined to 37 per cent in 1991 and 41 per cent in 1996 in spite of a series of programmes, e.g. the green revolution, back to land and Structural Adjustment Programmes, introduced by the government

from the 1970s to boost agricultural production. Thus, the entire economy has remained heavily dependent on oil.

The expansion of the oil sector was so rapid, massive and dramatic that it transformed the politics, economy and the character of the Nigerian state. It provided immense benefit, especially in the form of increased income to the state. For instance, oil revenue accruing to the Nigerian state increased from \$724 million in 1970 to \$24,933 million in 1980, that is from 58.01 per cent of total export to 96.14 per cent in 1980 (Khan 1994: 184). On the other hand, it transformed the Nigerian economy into a mono-mineral economy, the state into a *rentier* state and the population into consumers rather than producers. In the last case, the productive sectors of the economy have become overshadowed by massive increase in imported goods, both capital and consumer, due to the availability of cheap income from petroleum. Table 8.1 shows the situation as Nigeria enters the twenty-first century.

The dominance of oil resources and the stultification of the productive sector of the economy had made politics the most lucrative business in town. Thus, not only has the struggle for power, with its promise of control of oil revenue, intensified political conflicts, but the availability of oil rents has helped sustain personalized military regimes against popular pressure. Oil revenues underwrite the various measures and

Table 8.1 Oil in the revenue profile of Nigeria

Year	\$ Million			₦ Million		
	Total Export	Oil Export	per cent	Total Revenue	Oil Revenue	per cent
1988	6,931.7	6,319.0	91.6	27,595.0	19,831.7	71.86
1989	7,870.9	7,469.8	94.9	47,798.3	39,130.5	81.86
1990	13,671.1	13,265.6	97.03	69,788.2	65,215.9	93.44
1991	12,264.3	11,792.3	96.15	100,991.6	82,666.4	81.85
1992	11,886.11	11,641.7	97.94	190,453.2	164,078.1	86.15
1993	9,924.4	9,696.6	97.7	192,769.4	162,078.1	84.09
1994	9,415.1	9,170.7	97.4	201,910.8	160,192.4	79.33
1995	10,635.8	10,350.1	97.31	459,987.5	279,902.3	60.85
1996	16,153.6	15,866.4	98.22	520,190.0	408,783.0	78.58
1997	15,207.30	14,850.10	97.65	582,811.1	416,811.1	71.51
1998	8,971.20	8,564.70	95.46	463,608.8	324,311.2	69.95
1999	12,876.00	12,664.90	98.36	949,187.9	724,422.5	76.32
2000	19,441.40	18,897.20	97.2	1,906,159.7	1,591,675.8	83.5
2001	18,927.40	18,677.10	98.64	2,231,532.9	1,707,512.8	76.51

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report and Statement of Account (various years).

strategies of regime sustenance. One important aspect of these measures is territorial fragmentation: the creation of new states and localities by the government – hence, from a four-region federation in 1963 to a twelve-state structure in 1967, to 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991 and 36 states from 1996. The number of local governments has expanded from 301 in 1979 when the central government intervened in the local government system to 774 in 1996.

In 1963, Nigeria embarked on a state-creation exercise to allay fears of domination by minority communities and interests. It was thought that creating a state for minority groups would protect them in regions dominated by major ethnic groups by expanding the scope for self-determination. The second reason (particularly relevant to the 1967 exercise) was to restructure the federation in such a way that no one state or group of states could threaten the corporate existence of the country or hold the country to ransom. In carrying out the exercise, particular consideration was to be given to economic viability (Gowon 1996: 27). As time passed, however, economic reasons became completely overshadowed by political expediency. For instance, the 1987 and 1991 exercises were informed by three principles according to the views of the prime actors in the process. The first was social justice, which implied the mollification of those who had lost out in previous state-creation exercises. The second was the principle of an even spread of development centres across the country, since new states and localities were to have direct access to federal funding (i.e. oil revenue). The third was equal distribution of units between the north and south, and east and west. In doing so, recognition was to be given to historical, sociocultural and geographical relationships among the country's over 250 ethnic groups (Suberu 1994: 16, Aikhomu 1996: 53).

The bottom line is that these exercises have reduced states and local governments to mere channels for the distribution of revenue from centralized sources, albeit inequitably, to the constituent communities. In doing this, it removed the independent revenue sources of sub-national governments, weakened administrative effectiveness and undermined accountability of the lower tiers of government to their populations. Thus, Nigerian federalism has been essentially distributive in that the more populous and larger communities take more revenue from the coffers of government even though oil deposits are located in minority communities.

Transnational risks, actors and their strategies

The greater exploitation of oil than other natural resources carries with it a lot of dangers and uncertainties that carry both ecological and social

dimensions. Some of these – such as pollution and gas flaring – know no boundaries and hold great uncertainties for sustainable development for people as well as the environments where the exploitation takes place. Where precautionary measures are not taken, they inevitably generate social dislocations arising from forced physical resettlement. Sudden and dangerous pipe leakages or bursts resulting in oil spillages endanger the health of human, plant and aquatic life. Thus, risks arising from oil exploitation have provoked sharp reactions from communities where such exploitation is carried out, leading to severe and protracted conflicts between the Nigerian state and those communities, between those communities and oil corporations, and inter-communal strife over compensation, land ownership and questions relating to domination and social justice. Indeed, the calculations by these stakeholders of their relative advantage or disadvantage and the strategies adopted in pursuing their 'divergent' interests hold great implications for global governance and sustainable development.

Risk management has become one of the most critical elements of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta region. Risk management is about choices; which risks are worthy of consideration, which remedy to choose, how to trade off competing risks, balance competing factors. Risk is a subjective concept and reflects power relations in its analysis and management. There is, therefore, a need for an effective global framework for risk management that incorporates global inequality in terms of power, influence, resources and technical capacity for projecting risk among actors in natural resources exploitation (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Fone and Young, 2000; Pearce, 2000). From the perspective of the disadvantaged actors, global civil society holds great potential for social justice (Edwards, Hulme and Wallace, 1999). This chapter explores global civil society engagement with grassroots movement for environmental and social justice in Nigeria's petro-dollar economy, as a part of the challenge of transnational risk management.

The following sections analyse the interests, aspirations and strategies adopted to pursue the separate interests of the major actors in the exploitation of oil in Nigeria.

The Nigerian state

Oil has become the single most important material base of the Nigerian state, accounting for over 70 per cent of total revenue and 76 per cent of total export. In the postwar period, oil exploitation has become the live wire of the state's activities: bureaucracy, defence, infrastructure and social services. The implication is that any threat to oil exploitation is simultaneously a threat to the state. Being particularly subject to the

vagaries of the international oil market as expressed in the balance of payment crisis that it continues to suffer since the oil glut of the early 1980s, the state is committed to ensuring that local efforts to disrupt oil production is stopped with all the powers at its disposal.

The strategic importance of oil first became apparent during the civil war. When the Igbos declared independence for Biafra, the new country included the minority oil-producing communities even though the consent of these non-Igbo minority communities was never sought before the secession was declared. The Nigerian government, which had hitherto turned a deaf ear to cries of domination by these ethnic minorities, quickly divided the country into twelve states, with the minority oil-producing states divided between two, Rivers and Bendel. This raised the hope of autonomy for these minority communities within the Nigerian federal structure and the communities quickly joined the Nigerian effort to quell the secession attempt by Biafra (Adejumobi and Aderemi 2002).

However, state creation, which was successful in allaying the fears of these minority groups at the inception of the civil war in 1967, became an instrument for their further marginalization by successive military rulers when political considerations came to dominate as the basis for the creation of additional states.

While the strategy of safeguarding oil production has involved the use of both carrot and stick, force has dominated the action of the government in practice. For instance, the petroleum sector was one of the sectors considered to be an essential service sector when strikes were outlawed in the 1970s. Strikes by oil workers were dealt with decisively.

Furthermore, efforts by oil communities in pursuit of environmental and social justice have been met with violence by successive military regimes. For instance, the high mobilization and co-ordinated mass movement for environmental justice by the Ogonis were met by intense repression. The Ogoni region was militarized and the military special Task Force under Major Paul Okutimo terrorized the Ogoni region between 1992 and 1998. In 1995, after a kangaroo trial between 1994 and 1995, nine leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogonis (MOSOP), including its leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa, were hanged in November 1995. Saro-Wiwa's appeal was still pending before the Court of Appeal and the Federal High Court when he was executed. As a result of this the country was suspended from membership of the Commonwealth. (Membership was restored only after the return to democratic constitutional rule in 1999.)

The same mindless brutality was unleashed in 1999 when Odi, an oil-producing community in the Niger Delta, was razed by soldiers on the

orders of President Obasanjo in reaction to the kidnap and killing of seven policemen by armed youths there. Scores of innocent people were killed; thousands were rendered homeless, made to refugees and displaced persons in their own communities. This incident has remained a blot on the human rights record of the current government. The national government has also visibly supported the use of mercenaries by oil corporations in defence of their installations, an action that was challenged by the Delta State government in October 2003.

Apart from the strong-arm tactics, the national government, under pressure from the international human rights regime, the increasingly violent agitations by youths in the oil-producing communities, multi-lateral organizations (the United Nations, Commonwealth) and the global civil society movement, has set up structures to respond positively to the needs of the Niger Delta peoples. In 1988 the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was established to deal with environmental problems in oil and other sectors. In 1993 the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created to provide infrastructure and social amenities as part of the effort to respond specifically to the development needs of the Niger Delta region after several years of claims that the terrain there was too expensive and difficult to develop. Several laws and regulations were then introduced to prevent spillages and gas flaring by imposing penalties for such occurrences on the oil companies. Then, in 2000, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was set up to replace OMPADEC due to the failure of the latter to achieve the objectives for which it was set up (Osaghae 1995; Obi 1997; Ikporukpo 2002).

The transnational oil corporations

The multinational oil corporations are the most significant agencies of oil exploitation. They have the capacity to explore and determine where oil deposits exist in commercial quantities. They have the technical expertise and the capital to exploit and refine oil for commercial use. The terms on which a foreign multinational enters a country to explore for and produce its natural resource reflects largely only the careful balance of the estimated risks and rewards.

In fact, until the oil companies' arrival, the oil-producing communities have lived on their lands without even knowing that such deposits exist and have no inkling of the possibilities of wealth and its potential for environmental degradation.

Furthermore, oil companies invest huge capital and expertise in the joint ventures that carry out oil exploitation in Nigeria. The volume of

shares held by these companies run into billions of US dollars. These investments do not only have to be secured, the operations of the companies must be such that they ensure returns on these investments. Hence operational control is usually vested in these corporations reflecting their centrality above the state in the business of oil. Apart from the risks of investing huge sums in oil exploration, the fluctuations in the international oil market and operational accidents, the oil companies have had to contend with the disruption of production arising from the activities of protesting communities from the early 1990s. Thus, dealing with these pressures from the communities has been a major preoccupation.

Initially, the oil companies resisted the demands of these communities, maintaining that they were illegitimate. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), for instance, in a statement issued in 1993, argued that 'the most important contribution the company can make to the social and material progress of Nigeria is performing efficiently its direct line of business ... [the company cannot] pre-empt the responsibilities of the ... government in providing and maintaining social amenities and services' (see Ojo 2002: 39)

To curb the activities of these communities and their organizations, like the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the transnational oil companies maintain strong security outfits to protect their installations, flow stations and employees. This is backed by strategies such as silence, defiance or denials in the face of accusations of irresponsible behaviour and reports of dangerous incidences of oil spillages. In using silence and denials, the companies 'hide problems, pretend that problems do not exist or insist they are imagined'. The corporations may also defy the communities by issuing statements indicating that they will not alter policy positions because of protest or court action, persisting on a particular course of action regardless of mounting protests.

Oil companies have also incorporated leaders of these communities, state official and youth leaders by paying them, appointing them to decision-making structures in the oil companies, awarding lucrative contracts to them and having the cost of holidays and medical treatment in the mother countries of the oil companies paid for. Many of those bought over are silenced or act in ways that compromise the interests of their own people. While these were effective until the 1980s, the high mobilization among the masses has led to these leaders being branded 'vultures' (traitors). The anger unleashed on some of these compromised leaders accounts for the killing of the Ogoni Four, which culminated in the execution of Saro-Wiwa, thus occasioning division among the ranks of the oil-producing communities. Ultimately, the

companies and the Nigerian state deepen these divisions, exploiting them to divert protest. Currently, several host communities are up in arms against each other over the unequal distribution of community development projects (see Iyayi 2000: 159–67).

Ultimately, the protests became internationalized and oil companies increasingly face pressures from the international environmental movement, the United Nations and the Commonwealth, especially after the death of Saro-Wiwa in 1996. The companies have had to adopt a more humane approach, taking into consideration the new international human rights regime, and the risk arising from social issues protests.

The oil-producing communities

When oil exploration began in 1958 in Nigeria, indigenes of the oil production communities received the development with joy. Many believed that oil would transform their lives for the better. They had expected that a huge percentage of the revenue from oil would return to develop their communities, and looked forward to a more robust livelihood.

However, by the late 1960s it had become clear that their hopes for a better life were misplaced. Slowly but relentlessly oil exploration and exploitation activities generated serious hazards such as gas flaring, oil spillage, indiscriminate construction of canals and waste dumping. The oil multinationals acquired lands from the Nigerian governments and pipelines were laid across community farmlands thanks to the Land Use Decree of 1973 without compensation to the communities. Neither were fiscal and social infrastructures provided for the communities. By the mid-1980s when the Nigerian government introduced structural reforms of the economy the level of degradation and deprivation in the oil-producing areas had reached provocative heights. But the government under severe constraints by its creditors to curb social spending ignored the complaints of these communities. This attitude had started in the early 1970s when Ogoni kings and community leaders wrote to the government about 'Damages done to life line by the continued presence of Shell BP Company of Nigeria, her installations and exploration of crude oil on our soil' (Okonta and Douglas 2001).

By 1990, with worsening environmental degradation and in the face of significant infrastructural developments in Lagos, Abuja and major non-oil-producing state capitals, coupled with the comparative luxury, leisure and affluence in which oil workers live, it dawned on these communities that they had become victims of a conspiracy involving the Nigerian state and oil multinationals to utilize the resources in their land at the expense of their survival. Their protest against the Nigerian state and the oil

companies exploded into a full-fledged movement for a better deal. The government's initial reaction was to ignore them. Later it armed itself with laws and policies (of central control and ownership of natural resources) and intensified the use of security forces to secure oil installations. But this served to heighten the struggle of those minority oil-producing communities and radicalize their demands, supported by a level of mass mobilization hitherto unknown in the country, especially with the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) in 1990 under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa. The movement for environmental and social justice in the Niger Delta region since then has expanded in terms of its organizational expression. A brief list includes: the Movement for Reparation of Ogbaia (MORETO), the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Ijaw National Congress (INC), Urhobo Development Forum and the Pan-Niger Delta Resistant Movement (CHIKOKO) (Douglas 1998).

Many of these groups have published and presented their demands to the Nigerian state and the oil corporations in well-articulated documents. Popular among these are the Ogoni Bill of Rights (26 August 1991), the Kaiama Declaration (December 1998), the charter of demands of the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw (Ijaw) Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND) (October 1992) and Niger Delta Resistant Movement (CHIKOKO) (August 1997). Several other organizations, sub-groups of these larger and more popular organizations, have also articulated their demands. Most of these demands include:

- Compensation for oil-related environmental degradation.
- Political autonomy or the right to self-determination as a distinct and separate entity outside Nigeria.
- The immediate end to environmentally damaging economic activities by transnational corporations.
- Abrogation of the Land Use Decree and the Petroleum Decree, which rob Niger Delta communities of their right to control their land and mineral resources.
- The immediate withdrawal from the communities of all military forces of occupation and repression by the Nigerian state.
- That the Nigeria federation be run on the basis of equality and social justice.
- Employment in the oil industry and provision of basic social amenities (development projects) for their communities.

These demands have emerged as the sense of being victims became widespread among the indigenes of these oil-producing communities (Osaghae 1995).

In pursuit of these demands the communities and their organizations have made representations to the government and the oil companies. Considering the grave risks the specific actions such as oil spillages, gas flaring and other externalities of oil exploration pose to their livelihood and survival, the youth have given these companies and the government ultimatums and engaged security forces in combat. They have held public protests and rallies that have attracted international attention. In 1990, Ken Saro-Wiwa, then leader of MOSOP, successfully mobilized tens of thousands of Ogonis to protest against the policies of the federal government in relations to oil wealth and the activities of SPDC, the oil multinational that produces about half of Nigeria's oil. The persistent protests at its facilities forced it to close operations in Ogoni land.

Youths in oil-producing communities have engaged government security forces in combat and have forcibly seized oil installations, production facilities and flow stations. Their unrest has become a regular feature of the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta. This has taken the form of sabotage (allegedly causing spills and then negotiating what should be paid as compensation for those spills), hostage-taking and harassment (of staff of oil companies), and general disruption of oil production. These violent forms of protest are usually localized. However, they enjoy local and international media coverage because of their impact on oil production. These activities have caused the temporary or permanent cessation of operations in some locations.

During military rule, these communities had to contend with state governors who, being on military posting, were used as agents of the national government to oppress and suppress opposition in any form. This has, however, changed since the return to democratic rule. Under pressure from oil-producing communities, the governments of oil-producing states have begun to challenge the national government's exclusive control of natural resources. But again they have had to deal with the disadvantage of their minority status in the democratic contest of numbers.

Like the social movement, the Summit of Governors and Members of the National Assembly from the South-South Geo-Political Zone have pressed for state control of resources. They want the Land Use Act and other obnoxious laws, which empower the federal government to control the natural resources found in the territories of their communities, abolished. They also contest the distinction between offshore and on-shore oil in the implementation of the 13 per cent derivation revenue allocation to oil-producing states by insisting that offshore oil belongs to the communities. (The federal government maintains that offshore resources belong to the federation.) They have pursued this position through a series of public declarations and communiqués. A Bill was

tabled before the House of Representative on 9 May 2001 by Senator Harriman of Delta State and 13 others requesting the amendment of the Petroleum Act to compel oil companies to site their headquarters in their main areas of operation, and vest the ownership and control of petroleum resources in the oil-producing states, local governments and communities, thus reversing the spirit of the extant laws, among others to reduce tension, poverty and violence in the oil producing communities. The Bill caused a tempestuous session and was thrown out with 81 against 64 votes in favour, along a sharp north–south divide (see Aiyede 2005).

Another development of note is the federal government's petition, asking the Supreme Court to declare that 'the natural resources located within the exclusive economic zones and the continental shelf of Nigeria are, subject to the provision of any treaty or other written agreement between Nigeria and any neighbouring littoral foreign state, derived from the federation and not from any state' (Djebah 2001: 9) – clearly, a response to the demand by oil-producing states in the country that there should be no dichotomy between offshore and on-shore oil in the calculation of the 13 percent revenue allocation based on derivation.

In a decision made on 5 April 2002, the Supreme Court declared that the littoral states could not legally seek to control natural resources located beyond their seaward boundary. It also declared unconstitutional however the federal government's refusal to begin sharing the 13 per cent derivation formula from May 1999, and First Line Deduction System (FLDS), the latter a procedure whereby the federal government first deducts a percentage of funds credited to the federation account for the payment of debt before sharing the balance among the federal, state and local governments, among others. The first decision threatened to aggravate the conflicts in the oil-producing communities such that President Obasanjo had to adopt a political solution by presenting an appropriate Bill to the national assembly. This Bill, which was signed into law in early 2004, abolished the distinction often made between offshore and on-shore oil in the distribution of revenue. Meanwhile, the 1999 Constitution on which the Supreme Court based its decisions is undergoing a review. Many politicians have expressed the opinion that the issue should, as a result, be treated as a political rather than a legal/constitutional matter before the federal government instituted the suit.

Global civil society and local struggles

The global movement for environmental justice and sustainable human development has not only provided opportunity for drawing global

attention to the untoward activities of transnational oil companies in Nigeria, it has added voice to the concerns of these oil-producing communities and their organizations. Also, it has inspired the formation of environmental-focused NGOs in Nigeria. Several human rights organizations have been influenced, such that they began to emphasize environmental issues and the deleterious activities of the oil corporations. The result of these developments has been the publicizing of social and ecological risks and dangers posed by the way oil exploitation is carried out in Nigeria. In the event, the role of the Nigeria state and its collusion with transnational oil corporations in perpetrating environmental degradation, repression of resisting communities and disregard for the livelihood of the peoples of these regions has become publicly known. Indeed, NGOs have been the major agencies for making public the degree of degradation, irresponsible behaviour of oil companies and the violence that has characterized oil exploration in the Niger Delta.

These organizations have utilized their links with the media, their direct and indirect research capacity to unveil the realities in the Niger Delta. Thanks to their outputs, scientific data on the overall and long-term effects of environmental degradation on the livelihoods of those who live in the region are just beginning to emerge (Ojo 2002). The most authoritative work is that done by the Human Rights Watch (1999), *The Price of Oil: Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria's Oil-Producing Communities*. This has been supported by a series of publications in human rights assessments by local rights-based NGOs. For instance, *Boiling Point* by the Committee for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) published in 2000, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *The Crisis of the Nigerian State* published in 1998, and the series of Annual Reports of the Civil Liberties Organizations. The Internet has also been utilized to publicize the reports.

Many of the local publications were the outcomes of conferences and workshops organized to debate the issues and map out strategies for promoting social justice in the region, thus putting pressure on both the Nigerian state and the oil corporations.

These organizations have been involved in monitoring oil spills, sensitization of the peoples and communities on environmental rights, publishing periodicals to disseminate information on environmental issues and generally organizing protest rallies against human rights abuses and practices that contravene the ethics of sustainable development. They have instituted court cases on behalf of victims and have written letters of appeal to government, oil companies and communities as the case warrants in the interest of equity, justice and peace (see Ikporukpo 2000).

These organizations have utilized the opportunity offered by the internationalization of environmental interest groups, such as access to environmental rights and Africanist groups in the north to mobilize public opinion in major Western cities against multinational oil corporations. In the United States and Britain, for instance, a strong coalition of NGOs coalesced to challenge the Abacha government and oil companies. Activists picketed Shell petrol stations and carried out mass civil disobedience and direct action protest at Shell facilities in major cities. These worldwide responses had a substantial impact on the oil companies which have begun to show increasing regard for human rights principles, at least in their rhetoric (Fleshman 2000: 186–7).

Many of these protests enjoyed widespread media coverage. Indeed, Fleshman refers to the dramatic impact of the coverage of Chevron activities by Pacifica Radio Reporter Amy Goodman, involving the use of Chevron helicopters to fly mobile policeman to its platform in 1998 to remove unarmed youths. Two young men were shot dead in the incident (*ibid.* 189–90).

Conclusion

The change in the global human rights context and the opportunity of globalizing civic values and global action in its defence provide real hope for putting transnational risk on the global governance agenda. For less developed contexts, state weakness and financial pressures often lead to the disregard of local communities and local environmental movements. This in turn forces local communities and organizations to adopt costly violent behaviour in protest against environment degradation and other social injustice that straddle natural resource exploitation. Thus, the situation of risk is further worsened and the management made more complex. As we see from the analysis of the basis and forms of interaction by actors in oil exploitation in Nigeria, there is a clear challenge at the global level for risk analysis and management.

There is a critical role for global civil society because of the relative weakness of communities and peoples in relation to global corporations and national states whose interests coincide in the process of accumulation through natural resources exploitation. Global civil society holds the potential for promoting the realization of social justice for oppressed local minority communities in less developed countries, and thereby help improve transnational risk management. This can be realised through increased capacity to impact on global governance institutions and to understand and represent local problems and peoples at the

global level. These carry both activist and institutional challenges requiring a rethinking of the direction of global governance in terms of transnational risk management.

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