

AFRICAN THOUGHT SYSTEM AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF OIL COMPANIES IN NIGER DELTA REGION

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the causes of the conflict between oil producing multinationals and their host communities in the Niger Delta, and the management techniques adopted to avoid conflict of interest or resolve the crises, situation. The techniques were appraised in terms of recognition of the African thought system in conflict management and avoidance. A survey of 60 individuals in the capacity of Community Relation/Public Affairs Managers, Community Relations Officers, Supervisors of flow stations from oil producing firms and Youth leaders, Community heads, Chairmen of Community Development Committees and traditional Chiefs, all from the host communities on the Niger Delta, were taken. Information were obtained on the issues of impact of oil production, caused of the conflict, the management, and the African thought system. The study finds the production of oil claims large tracts of land which is not paid for, and equally degraded. The Nigerian constitution and the indifference to the environmental consequences of oil production shown by the oil producing companies. It was discovered that the management of the oil producing multinationals adopted the co-operative approach to avoid conflict but fail to incorporate the African thought system. It was recommended that inhabitants should be adequately compensated for land claimed for oil production activities, and that the management of oil producing firms should ensure that the compensation system put in place for agricultural products destroyed is accurately implemented by lands officers/damage clerks as well as recognize the beliefs, values and culture of the African man both in operating in their environment and in conflict resolution.

INTRODUCTION

Myers (described environmental turbulence or jolts as transient perturbations whose occurrences are difficult to predict and whose impacts on organizations are disruptive and potentially inimical. Ahiauzu (1999) believed that the African industrial workers cannot be fully understood unless one considers the African thought indigenous thought-system. The African thought system could facilitate negotiations during management. A mediator, for example, who is aware of the African thought system could more easily identify their interests, and develop consensus agreements between company management and the host communities. It is against this background that this study is undertaken to establish, empirically, the causes of the conflict between the local communities in the Niger Delta and the oil companies, the effectiveness of the conflict management procedures adopted by the oil companies, and the African thought system as it is believed to facilitate conflicts resolution (Oretuyi, 1995; Omotola, 1996; and Poppla, 1997).

THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT

The conflict between the Niger Delta people and oil companies on one hand, and the federal government on the other hand, has come to a stage that a scientific study is needed to finding a lasting solution. As Ekpenyong (1993) rightly puts it: if we know the cause, we shall be in a better position to prescribe solutions the conflict between the Niger Delta people and the government has been attributed to two main factors: (1) the Land Use Decree, and (2) Petroleum Act, 1969 (Mbachu, 1997).

The land use Decree of 1978, vested all land in Nigeria in the state, with all land comprised in the territory of each state solely in the Governor of the State except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies, who would hold such land in trust for the people. As a result, the state governor now had the responsibility for allocation of land in all areas to individual resident, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Governments. There are arbitrary powers in the decree regarding issues, such as grant and revocation of rights of occupancy, the quantum of damages payable by government for compulsorily acquiring lands, designation of lands as urban or non-urban, the duration of a certificate of occupancy and so on, determined capriciously and without any objective criteria.

The result is that the power to determine these issues are often abused to the detriment of citizens, and, one may add, communities (CRP, 2002). In *Shelter Watch* (1996), it was reported that the supreme court in the case of *Nwocha vs Governor of Anambra State and others* decided that the tenor of the Act as a single piece of legislation is the nationalization of all land in the country by the vesting of its ownership in the state leaving the private individual with an interest in land which is a mere right of occupancy and which is the only right protected in his favour, by law after the promulgation of the Act.

According to Mbachu (1997) the region of the law in Nigeria is traced to a similar law enacted by the British in Northern Nigeria, inspired by English tradition which vests all land on the English crown. Therefore, it is a law that can be said to be of colonial inspiration and feudal inclination, the latter explaining the role traditional rulers have been granted under the Act. No where else in Nigeria has the impact of the land use Decree manifested, in all its imperfections and Inequities, as in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria's oil producing region Mbachu (1997), NDBR (2201).

Section 289 of the land use Decree provides for the revocation of the rights of occupancy, while Section 29 provides for compensation payable revocation of occupancy. Section 28 (2) says that overriding public interest, a condition under which rights of occupancy can be revoked, includes the requirements of land for mining purposes or oil pipelines or for any purpose connected therewith, Section 28 (3) gives the same conditions for the revocation of a customary right of occupancy. Terms of compensation are stipulated in Section 29.

Another source of conflict is found in section 43 of the 1979 constitution, which vests all mineral wealth in Nigeria in the federal government. Therefore, what local communities are entitled to for loss of their land, is the loss of use. They own neither the surface nor what is beneath, according to Victor Dania, shell Nigeria's manager for environment and safety in the eastern division. But communities find it difficult to come to terms with that. It should not be surprising if communities find it difficult to come to terms with the current situation. As far as they know, whatever the law might say, the land is their ancestral land, and had always been so from the time human beings first occupied the place. For most of the ethnic groups in the area, the only time they ever lost control of their land was the British colonialists arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century. But colonialism was supposed to have ended in 1960, when Nigeria gained independence. Self determination should have returned to them, most of the communities expected. Not only did Nigeria become independent, the founding fathers decided that Nigeria should become a federation and a republic.

IMPACT OF OIL OPERATIONS ON THE NIGER DELTA

There are three basic ways in which oil operations impact on land and the environment (Olukoya, 2001; Zak, 2001). The first is through exploration. This is the first stage in oil production during which potential reserves are identified through seismic surveys usually carried out with the use of explosives on land and with air guns on water. If on land, this process requires access to often large tracts of land. Seismic surveys where successful are usually followed by drilling.

A drilling location occupying between 5,000 and 2,000 square meters is required for an oil well (SPDC, 1996). But this is not the only impact on land, because securing access to locations on narrow creeks so that drilling rigs and barges could be moved in. This also has its effect on surrounding land as it may now become more flooded than before, with more water being introduced to the area by the dredging. Drilling also produced waste which would be harmful on the environment. Successful completion of drilling is usefully followed by field development and production. it is now, that a net work of pipelines is used to link up the oil wells to the flow-stations, where gas is separated (and flared off in Nigeria) with the remaining mixture oil and water now pumped to the export terminals, where the two are separated and the oil is exported. However, after decades of competition for land between the oil industry and the communities in the areas, the communities are evidently losing out. The region has a heavy concentration of huge. Industries, mostly related to the oil industry, not seen in other region in Nigeria. Although most of the world's oil majors, including shell, Mobile, chevron, Agip Texaco Philips. BP and Statoil, Operate in the area, shell is by far the largest single operator, making the heaviest impact on the communities and the environment of the Niger Delta.

As Shell notes matters-of-faculty its 1996 annual report on people and the environment, a consequence of oil and gas operations is a requirement for land. According to the report, the Shell Petroleum Development Company, the Nigerian subsidiary, uses about 280 squares kilometers, which is 0.3 percent of the Niger-Delta. Most of this is for long term use, such as well sites, pipelines, roads, housing offices, and waste disposal sites, both for long term and short term

purposes. The latter include: seismic lines, drilling sites and temporary project accommodation (SPDC, 1996).

The physical space occurred may appear small compared to the entire Niger Delta, but the impacts and ripples pervade the entire area and beyond. The process begins with exploration activities, when the oil firms seek to identify oil and gas reserves by generating acoustic waves (with explosive on land with air guns on water) which reveal rock formations that harbour hydrocarbons. For the communities seismic surveys mean invasion of their environment by large numbers of people, clearing paths in their bush for access and firing heavy explosives.

The most promising locations identified in the survey are subsequently drilled. According to SPDC (1996), a drilling location occupying between 5,000 and 20,000 square meters is required, impacts from drilling include take for access and locations, and waste such as cutting and used mud which is always water-based but sometimes of environmentally problematic composition. Preparing access in the swamp means dredging, which causes turbidity and leaves spoils on the banks.

At present Nigeria flares about 75 percent of all the gas occurring in the course of crude oil production, because of a limited local market and a lack of infrastructure (CRP, 1999). While it is a waste of a valuable resource, it is a major source of air pollution, emitting huge amounts of smoke, carbon dioxide, methane from over 100 flow stations. With such activity having been continuous for over three decades, environmentalists and communities allege that they have been experiencing acid rain, with dire consequences for the ecology, particularly agricultural lands, water sources, residential buildings/structures and health.

The critical sections of the land use act for the Niger Delta include section, 1, 28 and 29. Section 28, which deals with the power of the Governor to re rights of occupancy for overriding public interests such public interest to include section 28 (2) (c) and (3) (b): requirement of the land for mining purposes or oil pipelines or for any purpose connected therewith. A full definition of public purpose is provided in section 51(1) (a-i) Section 29 says that "where rights of occupancy are revoked for these reasons, the occupier shall be entitled to compensation under the appropriate provisions of the minerals Act or the Petroleum Act. Land use and oil production activities in Nigeria are governed by a number of laws. They include the Petroleum Act of 1969, the oil pipelines Act, land use decree and section 43 of the 1979 Constitution. While the land use Act vests all land in the state, the constitution vests all mineral wealth in the federal government.

Before the land use Act, the oil companies operating in Nigeria recognized the indigenous communities as the owners of the land. When they wanted to encourage on any activity on the land, they approached the concerned communities and negotiated terms including payment of rent, the rate depending on whether the area required was swamp, dry land or seasonally flooded areas. What they are entitled to is compensation for the loss of use. They own neither the surface nor what is beneath. But the communities find it difficult to come to terms with that. For Fekurnor, it is not

difficult to understand why the communities find it difficult to come to terms with their sudden loss of land rights.

Meanwhile, the people would have suffered huge and untold losses. Apart from the health risks to which they are exposed by pollution, they suffer loss of economic activities. Fishing activity suffers as fish die from pollution or migrate elsewhere. Farmers are dislodged from the soil they have been using for so many years and all of these losses are not adequately addressed by either the compensation paid or the system of paying compensation. In this situation, the people become antagonistic. That have been deprived of their main stay, and yet the damage is not paid for. Because they are not adequately compensated, the slightest misunderstanding is conflict. If the official claims made by the oil companies, including shell, are to be believed, every effort is made to mitigate the environmental impact of all oil activities, and for this reason, the Niger Delta could be presumed not to be under any threat from environmental degradation.

Shell's official policy is that all field work shall be carried out in such a manner as to minimize impact on the environment. We create paths no more than one meter wide for seismic surveys, clear by hand in pristine areas, restrict the felling of tress, and replant where natural regeneration is not adequate, especially in mangrove areas (SPDC, Annual Report, 1996). Similarly, for drilling purposes, the company claims that the Western Division reduced the width of canals dredged to well sites to 48meters from 60meters. A 40 percent reduction in land drilling location size was achieved in both divisions for 1996. Then where spills occur, SPDC's policy is that all by hydrocarbons and chemical spills in the vicinity of the company's operations shall be cleaned up in a timely and efficient manner. Where the cause of the spill is unknown, then the company shall still effect the clean up and recoup incur costs at a later date.

The first evidence that shell was not following recommendations made by its own employees in the environment department in Nigeria came 1994, when Bopp Van Dessel, its head of environment, resigned in protest. Shell, he said, was being insensitive to the damage being done by its operations to the environment of the Niger Delta. The company alone, he said, was producing more greenhouses gases in Nigeria than all houses in the United Kingdom produce in one year. He explained that when shell had the need to flare gas in Europe, it pumps enough oxygen into the pipelines to ensure that a bluish-orange flare emerges. But in shell's 87 flow-stations around the Niger Delta, huge orange flares topped with soon burn eternally. Tell Magazine, August 19, 1997.

Another practice of oil operations with equally devastating effect on land and water resources is the dredging of creeks usually to bring in their rigs and barges. This has the effect of introducing salt water from the brackish water ways fed by the Atlantic into the fresh water system. This situation has led to a destructive change in the hydrological regime affecting the entire ecology. The consequences go even farther as farmlands are now permanently flooded due to the introduction of excess water into the area, severely limiting farming activities. Perhaps, the most controversial of all impacts of oil production on land in the Niger Delta is oil spills, because they are potentially the most devastating on agricultural lands and water resources. The Niger Delta has also witnessed so

many spills both on the massive and small scales that may take a long time for all the effects to manifest, and therefore be determined.

Oil spill, is a question of claims and counter-claims between the oil companies on the one hand and the local communities on the other. While the oil companies speak of a rapid response to spills, most of which they blame on sabotage, the local communities indicate a slow response, bordering on indifference and neglect.

OIL AND COMMUNITY DISTURBANCES

The first major incident indicating restiveness in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta occurred in 1990 involving the Umuechem community in the Etche local government area of Rivers State. The Umuechem community, unhappy at the impact of oil activities on their land, demonstrated against shell's presence. Shell reacted by calling in police to quell the demonstration and disperse the demonstrators.

Afterwards, the ant-riot mobile policemen brought into quell the disturbances concluded that one of their men had gone missing and had been probably killed by the villagers, police reaction was to raid the village at dawn. Before the village could awaken that fateful December morning in 1990, the police had surrounded it, suddenly opening fire and throwing grenades at the still sleepy village.

Hundreds of people were killed, including the traditional Chief of the village and of a few thousand people, forcing the wound and survivors to run from the village. This event, when reported in the media, caused a major national out cry and for many people in Nigeria was the first indication of the tension building up in the Niger Delta CRP (1999).

In sense, the year 1990 was indeed a turning point for the Niger Delta. It was also the same year that the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was founded by a number of educated Ogoni elite with the aim of redressing the negative impact of oil production on their land. MOSOP also went ahead to articulate an Ogoni charter of Demands. It was the first attempt to articulate the grievances and demands of an oil community in an elaborate manner.

With the writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa as MOSOP's publicity secretary and later president, the movement's main grouse was that since oil production began in Ogoni land in 1958, earning for the shell and the Nigeria state an estimated 30 billion dollars in revenue, the host communities have not had any benefits but instead have been left with degraded land. Decimated wild life, polluted rivers and creeks where fish no longer thrive and an atmosphere pumped full of air pollutants from gas flares, the oil firm had kept burning for decades (Lebart, 2000).

The Ogoni tragedy, as it has since unfolded, is a classic of the current wave of community distances now plaguing the oil producing areas. First starting as conflict between the Ogoni and shell, it has since developed all the features of the different forms of conflict in the Niger Delta. 'Next it developed into a conflict between the Andoni and the Ogoni, as well as between the Okrika and the

Ogoni. Eventually, internal splits followed among the Ogoni, with the group finally pitched against the government.

The consequences are now well-known events. First resulting in shell pulling out of Ogoni-land where it was producing 28,000 barrels of crude oil per day, it also resulted in the killing of four prominent Ogoni leaders, though by some youths to have sold out to the government. Then to cap the unfolding tragedy, the government, after a trial generally considered flawed, over charges of involvement in the murder of the four Ogoni leaders. Since the execution in November 1995, a permanent military presence has been maintained in Ogoni by the so-called Rivers State internal security force. Many MOSOP leaders were forced into exile abroad or driven underground.

But at the heart of MOSOP demand, which is also the same for other oil communities, is what they consider a fair share of the oil wealth produced on their land Lebari (2000). These are demands which call, not only for constitutional changes but also further empowerment of the people to give them a greater say in how the resources obtained on their land should be used. References were made by Ogoni leaders to what obtained in other oil producing communities in other parts of the world. Olukoya (2000) and Turner (2001). One popular example is the Shetland Island in the UK, with a population of some 30,000. People in an area of 800 square kilometers, which serves as the operational base for the mining of North Sea oils are captured as such. Proceeds account for 42% of the local council's budget, in addition to disturbance fees put in a trust fund that had yielded \$200 million in 1992. Another example is Alaska in the US where oil income accounts for 80% of the local administrative budget in addition to a direct share of income from the sale of oil mining licenses amounting to \$ 10 billion in 3 years between 1976 and 1989.

Denied of any comparable benefits by the laws governing oil activities in Nigeria (the Minerals Act, the Petroleum Act, the Oil Pipelines Act, the Land Use Act and the 1979, '87 and 95' constitutions), the oil communities' perception of injustice has grown increasingly acute resulting in the current disturbances in the oil producing areas, armies of youths have emerged, often educated but unemployed, but nevertheless aware that huge sums of money were being made from their lands. This is essentially the demographic change that has brought about restiveness in the oil communities, with the youths now very active in disrupting oil producing activities in search of a fair deal. One of the few ways significant income is earned in the oil communities is through compensation paid to host communities for surface disturbances to land or fishing areas. This has often fuelled inter-community disturbances as there are more often than not, conflicting claims over any piece of land as communities jostle for whatever benefits that might be available.

Claims over land ownership are central to disturbances which broke out in Warrin, the main oil city in the West of the Niger Delta, where fighting has been going on between youths of the Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic groups since March 1997. Land remains the main subject of conflict between the two ethnic groups, claims heightened by the presence of oil in the area. Although fighting had first broken out between the two groups over the relocation of a local council headquarters from an Ijaw area to an Itsekiri area, it turned out that land and the presence of the oil companies fuelled it (NDES, 1977). Aggrieved Ijaw youths angry at the relocation of the headquarters of the Warrin

South local government council from their Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben, an Itsekiri area, first reacted by taking over four shell oil flow-stations and held 127 employees of the oil company host a for six days. Over 90,000 barrels of oil was lost as a result in deferred exports.

Of importance in the disturb an in the oil producing areas is the role of traditional rulers. In Ogoniland there emerged quite a great gulf between the traditional rulers and the more militant MOSOP, which saw the Chiefs as government and oil companies' collaborators against the interests of the people. In the Warn crises, traditional institutions also featured. During the sittings of the judicial commission of inquiry set up to look into the Warn crises, the Chevron oil company was accused by both ijaw and Urhobo leaders of cultivating s special relationship with the O of Warn the traditional rulers of the Itsekiri, to the detriment of the other ethnic groups in the area. Chief Clark, a community leader in Urhobo called for a change of the title of Olu of Ward to Olu of Itsekiri, arguing that with the former title, created in 1952 by the Western regional government of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Traditional ruler of the Itsekiri is claiming lordship over the entire Warn and thereby claiming compensation from the oil companies for any activity in the area.

The basis for such compensation claims is a provision in the land use Act that compensation for surface rights over land acquired for oil activities would be made to traditional rulers to disburse as they deemed fit in their tradition on behalf of their communities. This particular provision has been a factor in many intra-community disturbances such as that involving the Kalabari ethnic group in Rivers State.

The fact that s spill was caused by sabotage does not mean that farms and fishing grounds of innocent people, they say, is perpetrating a double jeopardy. Since no genuine owner of a farmland will deliberately pollute his farmland with crude oil for the doubtful benefits of compensation (The Gardian, September 2, 1997). If they are adequately compensated, people will no longer come for compensation. Executive general manager (Elf) was quoted as saying that the old rates were unrealistic and a major item in the long list of grievances oil communities have against oil firms. However, the new stance still fails to address the burning issue of not paying compensation in cases where spills are found to have been caused by sabotage. Early in October, youths from local communities stopped operations of two flow-stations at Diebu (handling 10,000 barrels of crude per day) and Odema (pumping 20,000 bpd) run by shell while protesting non-payment of compensation for fishing grounds damaged by an oil spill in June. A few later, it was the turn of villagers from Ogbogbo and Emadji communities, whic1 stopped operations on a rig operated by the Italian Saipem for the Nigerian Petroleum Development company (NNPC) a subsidiary of the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) because despite the oil being drilling from their land, they have not been providing either electricity or portably water as promised.

THE AFRICAN THOUGHT SYSTEM IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND AVOIDANCE

The African inhabitations of the Niger Delta are culturally different with unique customs, values and problems not peculiar to or with any other nationality-within the context of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria. The Africans have a though system, which is shaped by their unique customs and values. According to (Tylor, 1971) culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.

Tylor's view are expatiated upon by Andah (1982) culture embraces all of the material and non material and non material expression of people as well as the processes with which there expressions are communicated. It has to do with all the social, ethnic, intellectual, scientific, artistic and technological expressions and processes of people usually ethically and/or nationally living in a geographical area, what they pass on to their successors and how these are passed on. From the foregoing, several characteristics of culture are discernible, that is, culture is: (1) a group product, shared by all, or intended to be shared by all; (2) universal to the group, but some aspects are specific too; (3) learned. It is socially transmitted, not instinctive or genetically derived; (4) created by man, and therefore subject to man's manipulation. It is adaptive; (5) dynamic, certain aspect is also static; (6) abstracted-that in a construct, never a neat entity; (7) real; representing all things; (8) also an ideal, that is, the members expressed values and codes that may or not be eventually transmitted into normal behaviour in their entirety; and (9) selective and integrated. Selection results from the possibility of unlimited patterns of behaviour in any culture and integration creates some order or regularity, and ensures the elimination of contradictory patterns of behaviour (an ideal, however).

According to Otite (1990) culture has traits, or behavioural norms. The culture of the Niger Delta inhabitants, if integrated into conflict management, would go along way to bring lasting peace to the area. In every culture, there are customs, norms and values, customs are established socially accepted practices within a given environment. Norms, on the other hand, refers to the conventional behaviour within a society. Our values refer to our perception of any concept or practices. The reasoning and thinking processes of the Niger Delta people could help to eliminate conflict if incorporated into conflict management. Niger Delta Communities are surrounded by rivers and other coated bodies. It is believed that the communities have water gods which owns and controls everything, including crude oil (Onwuejeogwu, 1995). The people believed that their water gods needs to be appeased. For instance, in most Niger Delta Communities, the inhabitants demand that the god of the Land be appeased before explorations works begin. It is doubtful whether the gods are indeed appeased, but oil companies pay bush entry fee which may cover the amount for appeasing the gods.

Since the communities in the Niger Delta have a peculiar culture. It is suggested that in conflict settlement, oil companies should use staff that are knowledgeable on the community culture. Such staff would recognize the unique mode of dressing, greeting and interaction during conflict resolution. Of course, there are cited instances of oil companies employing a representative of each community in the Niger Delta to handle any conflict that ensures (Ahiazu, 1999). It is also emphasized that proverbs be used to express the belief or truth of the Niger Delta people during interaction in conflict settlement. Regrettably, it is reported that the community does not speak in "one voice" but rather they are divided into groups with different objectives, The Constitutional

Rights Project, CRP, (1999). The oil companies are accused of creating competitive groups with the community to disuniting the people. They mastermind change of leadership as a way of disuniting the community to resist conflict. This uncompromising attitude of oil companies is believed to contribute to the conflict situations between oil companies and the inhabitants of the Niger Delta.

Management literature suggested a number of approaches for conflict resolution The ones adopted by the oil companies ranges from partnering, negotiations, and mediation Partnering is a process to prevent and manage conflict by working together as a team of equals to achieve specific objectives. One way of implementing partnering is to offer equal employment opportunity to the indigenes of the host community. There are quite a large number of Niger Delta citizens working in oil companies but the ongoing conflict has not ceased. Negotiation is a process for solving mutual problems, resolving differences or reaching mutual decision. This approach to conflict management is said to be the best in a situation of crisis between a company and its host community (Bragg et al 1993 and Wehrmeyer, 1 994). The method now seems to loose it's effectiveness for lack of compromise by both parties. For example, oil companies are accused of not providing social amenities, compensation for damaged properties and scholarship. Because of the land use Decree of 1978, most oil companies do not negotiate with the communities before exploitation works is state. Even in situations where there is negotiations, the companies often fail to comply with issues agreed upon, the Constitutional Rights project. This point to the fact that the people of the Niger Delta are not recognized as the owner of the resources. The people feel rnarginalized by the government. They fell being manipulated to enrich others. This accounts for the actions of the communities to stop oil companies from explorations activities. They do this to demand for construction of roads, electricity, pipe borne water, hospitals, schools, market and scholarship. This youth's pettiness is often resisted by the oil companies by the use of government forces.

Mediation is a dispute resolution process where a non-involved person helps the parties identify their interests and develop consensus agreements. The non-involve person may be a court or a commission set up for the purpose. However, in Nigeria, the judge and prosecutor are all embodied in the defendant (the company), who of course, sees negligence as a bait for alleging sabotage. All three processes of conflict management require commitment to the process, require agreement of all parties on how the process will proceed, and are unlikely to be effective if win-lose utilize interest-based negotiation as the fundamental approach to conflict prevention, management and resolution. Interest-based negotiating focuses on establishing trust and rather than the traditional win-lose approach. It is believed that the use of the three processes to resolve the ongoing conflict between the oil companies and their host communities do not achieve effective results because they fail to incorporate the African though system into the implementation of the three process. Ahiauzu (1999, p 24), believed that the African Industrial Worker cannot be fully understood unless one considers the African indigenous though-system.

The nature of the African though-system is likely to influence the work behaviour of the African Industrial Worker. Implicatively, this should also apply to the inhabitant of the Niger Delta who are protesting for their resources controls. Although the reasoning and thinking processes of the African

man may not differ from foreign counter par, their values, beliefs and ways of classifying differ (Ahiauzu, 1999). The African thought system is characterized by high degree of harmony among elements, symbolism, common-sense as guide, and a natural expression of mind guided by mystical thinking. Thus, Africans co-operate and are willing to negotiation in order to bring any conflict to an end. However, it is the failure to incorporate their thought process into the negotiation elements that hinders the effectiveness of the conflict management techniques found in literature. It is therefore, believed that the African thought system could facilitate negotiations during conflict management.

A mediator for example, who is aware of the African thought system could more easily identify their interest and develop consensus agreement between company management and the host communities. Interest-based negotiating focuses on establishing trust and co-operation with the objective of mutual gains, rather than the traditional win-lose approach. This, perhaps, may be effectively and efficiently achieved if the thinking (African thought system) of African man is recognized. In other words, the company's management should incorporate the African thought process in terms of their belief; values and culture. The study reveals that the Niger Delta people are being influenced by a water god, which they believe owns and controls everything, including crude oil. In fact, the people agree that when it becomes impossible to drill oil from any oil well, god of the land need to be appeased. Some of the communities studied demand that their land be appeased before exploitation work begins. The oil companies share or respect the culture of the community in which they operate. This may be done by sponsoring cultural and other competitive events in the community.

CONCLUSION

The ideas which necessitated this study were that the land use Act of 1978 and 1993, section 43 of the 1979 constitution, and the absolute indifference to the environmental consequences of oil production shown by oil companies are the causes of the conflict between the oil companies. It was also proposed that the co-operative approach of conflict management adopted by oil companies is defective due to non-incorporation of the African thought-system, and dishonest practices by community leaders and company officials. The data collected from the survey support all the propositions. We therefore conclude that the land use Act which vests all land in the government, and the constitution, which vest all mineral wealth in the federal government are the primary causes of the conflict between the oil producing multinationals and their host communities. The negligence of the oil multinationals to the environmental and social impact of oil production is also a cause of the conflict. The failure of Oil Company's management to incorporate the belief and value of the African man into conflict management has also contributed to the crises situation in the Niger Delta.

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