

WEST AFRICA PROGRAMME

**Enhancing the Capacity of
Women Leaders of Community
Organisations to Contribute
Towards Peace Building in the
Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT
NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA
12 – 20 JULY 2002**

AMINA SALIHU • EMEM OKON • NDEYE SOW



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International Alert

International Alert is an independent non-governmental organisation that is working to help build just and lasting peace in areas of violent conflict. It seeks to identify and address the root causes of violent conflict and contribute to the creation of sustainable peace. International Alert works with partner organisations in the Great Lakes region of Africa, West Africa, Eurasia, South and Southeast Asia and Latin America.

To complement fieldwork IA undertakes research and advocacy to influence policies and practices at the national, regional, and international levels that impact on conflict. The organisation seeks to act as a catalyst for change by bringing the voices and perspectives of those affected by conflict to the international arena and creating spaces for dialogue. The work hence focuses on the following global issues: the role of women in peacebuilding, development assistance in conflict and peacebuilding, the role of business in conflict and peacebuilding, and security and peacebuilding, including the reform of security sector institutions and combating the unregulated proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

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PREFACE

This needs assessment was carried out as part of International Alert's ongoing country strategy in Nigeria generally, and the Niger Delta in particular, and can be understood within the broader context of our West Africa regional strategy.

Cognisant of the fact that bad governance is in part responsible for the proliferation of conflicts in the region, the West Africa Programme's objective at the regional level is to strengthen the capacity of civil society, social movements and selected state departments at the local, national and regional levels to participate in and contribute to peace and human security in the region.

The strategy we pursue to realise this objective is the adoption of an integrated programmatic approach to the conflicts in the region, which seeks sectoral integration or work at local and national levels, interfacing with sub-regional and regional capacities. Thus, seemingly discrete work at the local level, such as the Niger Delta project, is part of a holistic jigsaw. The regional approach has been reinforced in recent years, as state incapacity to deal with conflicts and development in general is on the rise. The state in contemporary West Africa as elsewhere on the continent is "withering" whilst regionalism is increasing. Strategies for peace must therefore also be sought within the normative frameworks created by these regional bodies. These considerations have instructed our strategies of working at the level of ECOWAS and the Mano River Union.

After two years of systematic engagement in Liberia beginning in 1998 by the West Africa Programme, it became evident that there was a need to develop linkages with civil society and social movements at the sub-regional and regional levels in West Africa. Our experience over this period clearly demonstrated to us that the success ECOWAS had enjoyed over the preceding decade in bringing about the cessation of hostilities in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, was essentially a result of Nigeria having taken the leadership role in policy matters pertaining to regional peace and security, and shouldering the economic burden of peacekeeping. And yet we are very aware that the ushering in of a democratic government in Nigeria in May 1999, after almost 30 years of military rule, has brought in its trail more violent conflicts, some of which could challenge the country's political and economic integrity. Our approach to our work in Nigeria therefore recognises the fact that while peace in Nigeria is important in itself, should violent conflict ensue in the country, there will also be serious ramifications for the West African sub-region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The West Africa Programme wishes to express its profound gratitude to all those who were involved in the preparation of the meeting and in the production of this report. In particular, we wish to thank the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for their financial assistance, which made this needs assessment possible.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment that the women participants and organisations in the Niger Delta demonstrated during this needs assessment. We are grateful to them for giving up their valuable time and thoughts throughout the duration of the assessment.

We would also like to thank the women responsible for undertaking the needs assessment: Amina Salihu, the Programme Officer in charge of training at the Centre for Democracy and Development in Abuja, Emem Okon, International Alert's Coordinator of the project in Port Harcourt, and Ndeye Sow, Manager of the Great Lakes Women's Peace Programme at International Alert.

Nana K. A. Busia, Jr.
West Africa Programme Manager
International Alert

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the processes and outcomes of a needs assessment carried out with women in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria between the 12th and 20th of July 2002. The Niger Delta region has been subject to a three-pronged conflict between communities, oil companies and the Nigerian government, as well as facing conflict within communities. The work of the needs assessment was carried out as part of International Alert's project 'Enhancing the Capacity of Women Leaders of Community Organisations to Contribute Towards Peace Building in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria', and forms part of International Alert's strategy to support civil society groups in resolving conflicts. The principle objective of the project is to build the capacity of women leaders in the Niger Delta to enable them to contribute towards a non-violent resolution and transformation of conflict.

The needs assessment was conducted by a team of three women trainers, and was carried out in six states in the Niger Delta region. Through participatory, gender-perspective consultation, the assessment succeeded in gathering information for the design of an appropriate capacity building strategy, using women as a strategic focus group. The experience highlighted the critical potential of women as an organised force to achieve change in the Niger Delta region.

By the end of the assessment, through the use of questionnaires and extensive discussion, the women participants identified the following economic, social, ethnic, environmental and developmental issues as key challenges to their progress as women leaders and peace builders.

- Oil activities are severely changing the social, political and economic landscape of the Niger Delta, to the detriment of the inhabitants in the region
- High levels of material poverty and unemployment in the oil producing communities of the region exist in contrast to the large amounts of wealth produced by the oil operations
- Expected avenues of wealth and employment from the oil industry, and local or national governments are not available to local communities, and their absence had led to conflict
- Women are among the most impacted by oil operations; the operations have led to the destruction of women's livelihoods through environmental degradation and health problems, as well as the marginalisation of women's work generally
- Health facilities in the Niger Delta are extremely limited and under-funded
- The Federal, State and Local governments are all perceived as guilty by the communities for not ensuring that oil wealth is distributed in socially and economically beneficial ways
- Oil companies are viewed as culpable through their activities and obvious presence in the communities- for damaging the environment, using biased employment practices, making use of violent security forces and not investing more in local community development
- The partnership and collusion between oil companies and the Nigerian Government is viewed as corrupt, unjust and leading to violations of human rights on a number of levels

The findings of the needs assessment were instrumental in helping design a framework for training women to be peace builders in the future, both in terms of their own capacity-building needs as women and their conflict transformation skills. The training will take place with women from NGOs and communities in the Niger Delta during three workshops between July 2002 and November 2003. Based on the views expressed during the needs assessment, the following points will form the basis of the training.

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- Capacity building must link women's practical needs with strategic needs
- The strategic needs of women as peace builders will be enhanced by gender and women's leadership training
- Training must include the transfer of conflict transformation/management skills
- Networks should be developed between communities in the Niger Delta to exchange information about oil company operations, to share experiences and develop human capital
- Organisational development strategies will also be included in the training, to help nurture new organisations and encourage cross-organisation collaboration
- The training process will empower/engage representatives from minority and majority groups in the region, regardless of class, religion, etc.
- Fundraising training will be undertaken with the aim of addressing the challenges faced when trying to acquire human, financial and technological capital among women's groups.
- The ongoing 'Training of trainers' (TOT) will enable skills to be evaluated and reviewed, and will provide opportunities for sharing experiences and techniques to address current issues.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

During 1999, in the aftermath of the Nigerian national elections, International Alert (IA) received representations from organisations in the country and the Nigerian Diaspora, looking to support the peace building efforts of local organisations. These organisations were working to intervene in the long running tripartite conflict in the Niger Delta (a conflict involving the government, oil companies and the communities) on the one hand, and the religious conflicts in the North (over the introduction of Sharia Islamic Law) on the other. Consequently, the West Africa programme team carried out research and gathered data which formed the basis of two exploratory field missions into the region in July and December 1999. The purpose was to deepen our knowledge of the region and our understanding of the specific issues at the heart of the conflict, and to identify possible areas of intervention in co-operation with local NGOs.

2.1 Background to the project

International Alert, in an attempt to support efforts by civil society groups in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian government, and members of the international community in resolving the conflicts in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria, convened a meeting in Banjul, the Gambia, between 7th – 12th August 2000, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The meeting brought together women from various organisations representative of the ideological and ethnic diversity of the region, and aimed specifically to:

- Support the numerous peace initiatives in the Niger Delta;
- Create an enabling environment and forum for exchange of views amongst the Niger Delta women on how best to constitute themselves into a critical mass for peace building;
- Create an additional forum for the women to interact and discuss with representatives of the Nigerian Government;
- Deepen our understanding and knowledge of the causes, nature, and types of problems and specific challenges in the Niger Delta;
- Establish confidence and trust building amongst the various stakeholders in the Niger Delta;
- Identify possible concrete policies and actions that need to be embarked upon as a way forward.

During the meeting, participants discussed exhaustively the crisis situation in the Niger Delta, identified the causes and the parties to the conflict, and their needs as women in the region. International Alert was able to facilitate a meeting between the participants and representatives of the Nigerian government, and ensured that the Minister for Women Affairs, Mrs Hajia Aisha Ismail and the then Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Mrs Becky Ketebou-Igwe attended. At the end of the six day consultative meeting, the participants resolved to go back to their respective communities and carry out intensive mobilisation, while International Alert designed a training programme on conflict transformation, mediation and negotiation skills to be held in Niger Delta.

The recommendations of this meeting informed a project proposal entitled *“Enhancing the Capacity of Women Leaders of Community Organizations to Contribute to Peace Building in the Niger Delta”* funded by the FCO, as a follow up to the Banjul meeting. The principal objective of this project is to build the capacity of women leaders in the Niger Delta to enable them to contribute towards a non-violent resolution and transformation of the conflict in the region.



IA'S DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL,
MARTIN HONEYWELL, THE FEDERAL
MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, HAJIA
AISHA ISMAIL, THE THEN STATE MINISTER
FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, MRS BECKY
KETEBOU-IGWE, AND PARTICIPANTS OF
THE BANJUL CONSULTATIVE MEETING.

For effective implementation of this project, IA and our Niger Delta partners decided to co-opt more women so as to be more representative of the communities in the Niger Delta, and as a result this needs assessment was carried out in July 2002.

2.2 Why was the Niger Delta needs assessment necessary?

The main goal of the needs assessment was to gather information for the design of an appropriate capacity building intervention strategy for the Niger Delta, utilising women as a strategic focus group. It was instructive that the needs assessment meeting coincided with the period of the take over of the Chevron-Texaco flow station by the women of Ogorodo community (known as Escravos). The experience further highlighted the critical potential of women as an organised force to achieve transformative change. It is important that trainers have an understanding of the dynamics of the group prior to the design of training intervention, in order to design a high impacting intervention strategy. The needs assessment was useful in this respect as it highlighted class, gender and group dynamics in the Niger Delta.

The needs assessment also provided an opportunity to evaluate the work and challenges encountered by the initial group of women from the Niger Delta who met in Banjul in August 2000. The initial group had expanded and the assessment therefore highlighted other possible leadership potential for a more effective critical mass and strategic network of women in the Niger delta.

2.3 Methodology

A literature review to provide background information to the rich political and economic history of the Niger delta was undertaken.

The needs assessment was conducted in July 2002 by a team of three women trainers: Amina Salihu, Programme Officer in charge of training at the

Center for Democracy and Development in Abuja, Emem Okon, IA Coordinator of the project in Port Harcourt, and Ndeye Sow, Manager of the Africa/Great Lakes Women's Peace Programme at IA. For reasons of qualitative contact, the needs assessment team selected six out of the nine Niger Delta states¹. The six states visited were Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, and Ondo states². The team visited a maximum of two communities in each state. The largest focus group discussion (FGD) was a group of 35 women and a man, while the smallest was a group of three women. The team conducted the needs assessment through participatory, focus group discussions using a careful blend of open and close-ended questions.³

The needs assessment was conducted from a gender perspective, encouraging the participation of both men and women, but with the primary view to giving voice to the aspirations of women. The meetings were conducted on the basis of a questionnaire developed by the team and focusing on the following areas:

- Economic and social impact of oil exploitation on the communities and on women in particular
- Environmental impact of oil exploitation on the communities and on women's health in particular
- Relations of communities, and women in particular, with oil companies
- Ethnic divisions within the communities and their impact on women
- Relationships with Federal and Local Governments and other political institutions and structures
- Gender relations within the communities
- Women's needs in the areas of development, capacity-building and organisational development

The team was conscious of the need to manage power dynamics within the groups. It did this by getting the women into groups, separate from the men, to enable the women to express themselves without the constraint of the institutions of patriarchy represented by male authority - village head, family members, husbands or male colleagues. This was very difficult in most instances. In cases where it was not possible to separate women into different groups, women were encouraged to speak out through direct questions about their particular experience. Inter-class dynamics hardly played out within the individual women's group, as each group was generally homogenous. Class dimensions, i.e. educational background and income level, were observed as an inter-group phenomenon. This came to the fore in terms of identified priority needs by separate groups.

2.4 Limitations of the needs assessment

Language: The team had facilitators who spoke the local language⁴. A member of the team was familiar with some of the Niger Delta languages and the team also understood Pidgin English - a local variant of English spoken by many of the people we interacted with. The team verified meanings of expressions in some cases by having at least two persons in a group who could verify each other's interpretations. We are nonetheless aware that there might however have been certain cultural nuances which interpretation may not have adequately addressed.

Infrastructure: The team had initially planned to visit as many as three communities per state, but we had not reckoned with spatial and temporal dimensions as well as the bad state of the road network in most parts of the Niger Delta. The terrain was made more challenging by the

fact that it was the rainy season and rivers overran their banks, while roads were flooded. The greater part of the journey was over land on sometimes pothole-ridden roads where our vehicle had to slow to a mere crawl in order to negotiate the road. The other half was on open sea, in an open 8-seater boat with a plastic sheet for cover when it rained. The team's mobility was inevitably impaired within this context.

2.5 Challenges

The pressure of expectations: It is not possible to do research without affecting the lives of the research subject. This becomes even more serious from a feminist perspective where the subject and the researcher can share knowledge and solidarity. The team sensed growing researcher apathy, where respondents were becoming irritated at being considered objects of curiosity by many researchers, without any commensurate transformation of their conditions. The respondents expressed genuine fears and aspirations, some of which are captured in this report and which the meta goal of intervention should seek to address.

Designing interventions that will lead to the transfer of skills: From the needs assessment, it is also clear that we must design intervention strategies that will encourage advocacy by *selves for selves* rather than by others for others. Beneficiaries should be encouraged to include dynamic plans of action that can affect the broader constituency they represent.

Sustaining links: Beneficiaries should be encouraged to evolve dynamic plans of action that can affect the broader constituency they represent. The training interventions should seek to incorporate strategies that will allow for post workshop evaluation and monitoring of the beneficiaries' post workshop activities.

Funder's commitment: Capacity building is perforce a long-term, high cost project that must also be viewed as a process. This means the originating organisation, in this case IA, must be willing to devote a realistic long term budget with a programme span of at least 3 years.



MOST OF THE HEALTH RELATED ILLNESSES REPORTED BY THE COMMUNITIES IS LINKED TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION GENERATED BY OIL EXPLOITATION ACTIVITIES SUCH AS: OIL SPILLS, GAS FLARES, AND CONTAMINATION OF WATER AND OIL.

3.0 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section is divided into six sections: a broad introduction to the context of the Niger Delta, followed by five sub headings outlining critical issues of concern which emerged out of the process of consultation from the people's perspective.

3.1 Context of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta, the main oil and gas producing area of Nigeria, has been described as one of the largest wetlands in the world. It covers an area of about 70,000 square km and consists of four distinct ecological zones which are characteristic of a large delta in a tropical region: coastal ridge barriers, mangroves, fresh water swamp, forests and low land rain forests (Sagay,2001; Okonta and Douglas, 1999; Herbert, 2002b). The communities that inhabit the area are made up mainly of fisher persons in purely riverine areas, and farmers in the drier areas. They also have some local industries such as salt and mat making, which are dependant on the mangrove and surrounding swamp waters (Sagay, ibid). In 1956, the first oil well was sunk at Oloibiri, and oil became very important to the Nigerian economy. The oil industry has brought economic benefits to the multinational corporations and the Nigerian government, but has brought on the Jindigenous people of the Niger Delta environmental problems, ecological degradation, health hazards and poverty.

The plundering of the resources in the Niger Delta started in the early 20th century with the Sapele wood and Palm oil. Sapele wood became a symbol

of good timber. With the growth of the logging business, commercial traders migrated from rural communities to Sapele in search of jobs. The timber did not last for very long. The time came when it got depleted, but resultant erosion, poorer soils, poverty, depletion of wild life resources, unemployment and frustration persisted in the environment where the lumbering activities took place (Douglas, 2000). While they lasted, the logging resources were not used to address the developmental needs of the people, neither was anything done to protect the environment. A similar situation is currently unravelling with the oil industry. In spite of its considerable natural resources, the Niger Delta area is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped parts of the country. The inhabitants, 70% of whom still live a rural subsistence characterised by a total absence of such basic facilities as electricity, pipe-borne water, hospitals, proper housing and motorable roads, are weighed down by debilitating poverty, malnutrition and disease (Okonto & Douglas, 1999).

Geographically, the Niger Delta is home to some seven million people, divided into several ethnic groups including the Ijo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Efik, Annang, Ibibio, Andoni, Ogoni, Edo, Etche, Ikwerre, Kwale-Igbo, Ilaje and Urhobo, among others. These groups are found in seven states in southern Nigeria: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers and Ondo.

The region has one of the highest population densities in the world. The annual population growth is currently estimated at 3% annually. Rapid population growth is increasingly exerting pressure on cultivable land, a good part of which is in any case prone to flooding almost all year round. The population of Port Harcourt and the other major towns in the Niger Delta is virtually exploding. The ensuing scenario -urbanisation without economic growth - has resulted in the human ecologist's ultimate nightmare: a growing population, which, in a bid to survive, is destroying the very eco-system that should guarantee its survival (Okonta & Douglas, 1999).

BY TAKING AWAY THE LAND FOR OIL PRODUCTION AND POLLUTING THE RIVERS AND CREEKS, OIL COMPANIES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO DESTROYING WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS AND MARGINALISING WOMEN'S WORK.



3.2 Economics

A common thread running through the communities we visited was the problem of material poverty, the high cost of food and underemployment due to a lack of access to basic tools of trade or capital. There was a pervasive feeling of powerlessness arising from a lack of response from all the avenues where people expected hope and succour, such as the local government, oil companies, the state and federal governments. In the case of Ogborodo (Escravos), Chevron had pledged to provide a village complete with schools, health facilities, fishing facilities, and garri processing. The picture was rather different: no village had been built, the rains were washing the little that was left of the community away, and the youth were unemployed - although they were usually invited to participate in aptitude tests for employment they always failed to pass⁵.



WOMEN ARE THE MAIN PRODUCERS IN THE NIGER DELTA AND THE MAIN PROVIDERS IN THE COMMUNITIES THROUGH FISHING AND FARMING, ALTHOUGH, THEY DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION OR MARKETS, AND OFTEN ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE POVERTY LADDER.

Feminisation of Poverty

Women are the main producers in the Niger Delta and the main providers for their communities. They spend more time providing for the livelihood of the family and always put the family and the community's needs ahead of their own. Women are primarily involved in farming and/or fishing in the creeks and rivers. They are also involved in petty trade and small-scale businesses such as hairdressing, sewing, soap making, and baking. Most of them have no access to the means of production that would enable them to perform better. In most communities visited, women don't own land. The situation is even more precarious for women in communities like

Ofombongha in Cross Rivers State, where there is dispute over land. Women spend long hours in the fields and use very basic tools to cultivate the land, such as knives and machetes. Most women farmers have no access to fertilisers. They have no proper means of transport to carry their produce and have to walk long distances with heavy loads on their heads. There are not enough markets within the communities to sell the products.

Furthermore, where women apply their direct labour, the share of income they receive is less than that of the men who have expended less energy. Farming is one such example. In Obubura, Cross River State, women till the yam crop twice before it is harvested, participate in its harvest, carry the crop home, help the men with the storage in the barns, prepare some of the crop for domestic use, take the crops to the market to sell and give 2/3 of the income to the men, keeping only 1/3 for themselves.⁶ Apart from yam, women also plant “female crops”⁷ such as leafy vegetables, cassava and cocoa yam. However, due to the scarcity of resources, women farmers are facing competition from their male counterparts. In Yakuur community for example, men are now planting “female crops”, such as cassava and making more money out of it than women.

What were the women’s economic needs?

What we found was not absolute poverty, but relative poverty as well as an under-utilisation of capacity. This is largely because of a lack of access to opportunities and simple basic needs, which can transform lives. The women wanted opportunities for trade, markets for their fish, skills such as preservation techniques, typing, computing, hairdressing for the youth, skills acquisition centres and financial capital - through micro credit and grants. A creative way to address access to credit is through the *esusu* or thrift contribution amongst members, which augments their income. Members of the group we spoke with in Ubeji community belonged to many forms of thrift societies. On the other hand, in the agrarian communities we visited, respondents expressed the desire to have alternative sources of income to supplement income from agriculture and also employ their energy during non-farming seasons. The women expressed the need for basic facilities such as an upland toilet as opposed to a riverside toilet, which gets washed away whenever the floods come.

3.3 The community and Oil Multinational Corporations (MNCs)

The gender dimension of oil exploitation

Six oil companies operate amongst the communities visited; they are Texaco, Total Fina - Elf, Shell, Mobil, Chevron and Agip. Just like any other community, life in the Niger Delta depends on the environment. The river is key to all the activities in the region. It is all at once the source of transportation, livelihood, drinking and cooking water. In addition, the river also traditionally serves as a bathroom and toilet for the community. In this context, water pollution in the Niger Delta is a critical issue. Pollution occurs through acid rain and oil spillage⁸ and action that will affect the natural flow of the river, such as diverting its natural course of flow.

Women are amongst the most affected by oil exploitation activities. By taking away their land for oil production and polluting the creeks and rivers, the MNCs have contributed to the destruction of women’s livelihood and the marginalisation of women’s work. In the Iko community (Akwa Ibom state), Shell diverted the course of the river in order to build a wider waterway for oil transportation. As a result, the river and the mud flats, which were once a source of livelihood for fishing, transportation and trade by boat from one community to another, had become stagnant. The community, especially women, could no longer fish for lobsters, shrimps and periwinkles.

A NOTICE PUT UP BY LOCALS IN NTAFERE COMMUNITY, AKWA IBOM STATE, TO INDICATE A TOXIC WASTE SITE AS A RESULT OF OIL COMPANY ACTIVITIES.



In Ubeji Community, in Delta state, women contract infection when they use the stagnant water from the river to clean up after defecating. The oil companies sometimes made promises to the communities to redress some of the damages, through clean up exercises and provision of credit support to the community. The team was informed that although women suffer directly from the brunt of environmental degradation through their productive and reproductive roles, the oil MNCs marginalise women in discussions with the communities on ways of ameliorating the damage to the environment⁹. This could be because the community leaders, who are male, are presented as the spokespersons of the communities. Even in instances where women go directly to the oil companies to raise issues of direct concern to them, the companies are reluctant to deal directly with them. While the traditional rulers are the *de jure* rulers, the youth have emerged as the *de facto* leaders of the community, who are recognised as a vital force in responding to and setting the community needs and agenda. Women of Ubeji would like the oil MNCs to deal directly with the women rather than through representatives¹⁰.

The responsibility profile of MNCs

A recurring theme during the needs assessment was the perception of corporate culpability or the level of responsibility of the oil MNCs. It was generally agreed that Shell was most culpable and Mobil the least. Description of the degree of corporate responsibility was relativised. Communities gave a pyramid of responsibility of the MNCs. Interestingly, even where certain MNCs were not operating, communities were able to rank them based on the information they had about their corporate responsibility profile. There was also an assumption that some communities were better off because their 'resident oil companies' provided for their social needs¹¹. Even people who live in communities where Mobil prospects concede that they have fewer problems than they hear communities in Shell prospecting areas. Even in Ikolor (Bayelsa state) where Agip has oil heads but is yet to begin prospecting, Mobil was also thought to be a more considerate oil company. The question is, would Mobil continue to be as responsible a corporate citizen if it had a spread similar to that of Shell?¹²

Table 1: Oil producing profile of communities visited

Oil producing Communities	Non Oil producing
Iko in Akwa Ibom state	Yakurr in Cross River state
Ikolor in Bayelsa state	Obubura in Cross river state
Egi land River state	Odi in Bayelsa state
Ibeno in Akwa Ibom	

3.4 Democracy and governance

Community perception of the Federal Government

Nigeria operates a federal system of government, which recognises three tiers of government: the Federal, the State, and Local government. Nigeria is a mono cultural economy with reliance on oil export as the primary source

of revenues. This oil comes from the Niger Delta. Therefore as a way of ensuring equity and even development of the Niger Delta, oil-producing states are entitled to 13% derivation of national revenue. In addition, there is the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), established to address the social and infrastructural development of the Niger Delta. We noted that no group thought of the federal government as having any key role in the development of the Niger Delta. Even with the establishment of the NDDC, Abuja was described as being too far away - in both a physical and policy sense. Where there are government development activities, self-sustaining mechanisms are not built into the project design. For example, the Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN), a Nigerian NGO, worked in conjunction with the Family Support Programme created by the then wife of the head of state Mrs. Maryam Abacha, to build a gin distillery for Arogbo community in Ondo state. This is one of the few communities in Ondo state which has oil. The project folded after a year of operation because there was no provision for maintenance of the machinery. The local government was described as nearer to the people geographically, however the communities say this proximity does not translate into qualitative change in the lives of the mass of the people. In some instances the local government headquarters were referred to as sites of marginalising the minority groups within the Niger Delta.

A government bureaucrat and researcher in the Niger Delta once asserted that there are no development policies on the Niger Delta¹³. His reasoning was that what can be regarded as policies are disconnected from the people and even where consultations take place, the resultant policies do not address the problems mentioned. According to the Land Act of Nigeria, any place where minerals are found is designated a minefield and so no infrastructural investment can be made in such a zone (Omoweh, 2002). The whole of the Niger Delta has a mineral resource- oil- and is thus an oil field in the logic of the Land Act. The meaning here being, the Niger Delta should not expect development because it is an exploration field. One may however ask the question: what came first, the oil field or inhabitation? If it is the latter, then the state has one of two options: resettle the people elsewhere with adequate compensation, or desist from exploration near communities.

Community perception of Oil MNCs and the State

Communities are quite clear that the State is separate from the oil companies in terms of provision of amenities for the people. They feel, however, that certain elements within the



government must be colluding with the oil companies on the degradation of communities' land and water to have reached such a grand scale. While they do not blame the oil companies alone, the companies are physically present exploring and damaging the environment. As such, the oil companies are seen as guilty due to their direct activities (and the government by its absence), and the communities therefore expect them to redress this injustice. In Iko for instance, the environmental neglect by Shell is attributed to the fact that none of Shell's administrative structures are in Iko, therefore Shell has limited contact with the everyday realities of the people's lives. This is in comparison to Mobil, which has its terminus and staff residences in Eket, and thus has had to provide a good road network for Eket. Shell is regarded as detached from the concerns of the people.

Many criticisms of Shell and other MNCs in Nigeria have focused in the issue of the culpability of the Nigerian government co-operating with the MNCs in depleting the resources of the Niger Delta. Inasmuch as Shell might be less than responsible as a corporate citizen, it has its allies in government, which are colluding with Shell to exploit the people, rather than protect them. Why is Shell more sensitive to the environment in the northern countries where it exploits oil than it is in a southern country like Nigeria? In Effurun Delta state, we learnt that the main culprit was the government, by supporting the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation's (NNPC) refinery. The NNPC washed its effluent directly into the river¹⁴. Also in this State, it was alleged that the Nigerian navy confiscated a prime agricultural parcel of land belonging to the community. This land was being designated as a naval base, even though it was far removed from the sea and was not used by the navy.

Women's participation in party politics

Participants demonstrated an awareness of politics, while at the same time registering their disillusionment with partisan politics, i.e. voting and/or contesting for public office. Minority communities are not able to go beyond fielding a local government councillor as the majority groups usually take the local government chair. Women are, however, increasingly aware of the need to encourage women to vote and seek elective offices. Even though there is the apprehension that men will not be willing to concede political space to women, women by their sheer number and influence can have an affect on local politics.

3.5 Gender relations

Marginalisation of women

The Niger Delta is no different from many other patriarchal societies. In the communities we visited, traditional rulers, village heads or chiefs, as the case may be, acted as the community gatekeepers, and needed to be informed about all events taking place in the community. Even when we wanted consultations to be held in a woman's home, the women took us to the community head, who was invariably male. We learnt that informing the community head about strangers visiting assures the community, through its head, that the intentions of the visitors are honourable. To this end, the meetings were almost always held in the house of the head of the community, conferring legitimacy and security on the meeting.

The decision to hold the meeting at the house of the village head may also be a placatory step in cases where the head was not informed about the meeting beforehand. They say the venue makes the event, and the women believe that the chief's house confers status on the meeting, and gives the women's group more respect in the eyes of the visitors and the community and might even win the group more members. In any case, the chief has a bigger, more comfortable

indoor space than most members of the community. The problem that this creates, however, is that the chief and members of his council who join the group take up more dialogue space than is healthy for a group.

As custodians of the community who have participated in many discussions concerning the preservation of the community, they are more knowledgeable about events than are the women, who are primarily responsible for child rearing and economic activities¹⁵. Strategic as this may be, it does not translate into power to make or participate in decision-making. In instances where we were able to have a women only group, such as in Ibeno and Obubura (only one man), the response was more spontaneous, though history and statistics were sometimes hazy. The women were able to express their expectations and explain why these have been met or not, and what strategies they have used.

Class and Gender

Class here refers to access and control of the means of production. Poorer women, such as working and peasant women in local communities, accused rich women, who have greater access to state resources, either by virtue of their education or links to the ruling class, of exploiting them¹⁶. The class dimension comes in here, where women have been excluded from access to formal education and active participation in decision making, they are likely to know less than the men about the affairs of the community. This category of women are more likely to capitulate to what they may perceive as the superior logic of the men who are educated. As a result, while we got more information from groups where men joined in the group discussion, it sometimes left women out of the picture.

Poverty in the Niger Delta is relative rather than absolute. In communities where the group was made up of women who had a steady and substantive means of livelihood or entrepreneurship, contribution to the needs assessment team was usually elaborate. Educated members who had the double qualification of possessing economic means and a western education were the entrepreneurs. In such instances, a speech was usually prepared which highlighted the achievements and challenges of the community and its women¹⁷. They also wore uniform attire as a mark of solidarity and organisation. The uniform attire also helped formalise the occasion and conferred respect on the visitors¹⁸.

On the other hand, poorer women, while also demonstrating a capacity to inform the needs assessment, usually recounted their achievements and challenges orally, having few or no writing skills. In groups where the majority were not literate, the literate few were presented as the leaders or part of the leadership. The leadership was, however, usually deferred to someone who was older and wealthier, although this also varied depending on the specific goals of the organisation.

The needs of the various groups were sometimes so different it was difficult to establish a common thread. The need for a skills acquisition centre was a common demand across classes. However, in Arogbo community, where we met a mixed class of royal wives, educated women, schoolgirls and peasant farmers, all within one group, the school teacher outlined the needs of the community. One of the crucial needs was a photo laboratory; this was seen as strategic so that colour pictures could be produced in the community rather than taking films to Benin for processing, which takes months. At face value one might be tempted to say that a photo lab is not a priority for addressing poverty. However, a closer look revealed that it is a strategic need, which can generate basic needs like generating employment and learning skills, in addition to documentation of community life. Earlier groups had only identified immediate practical needs.

WOMEN IN THE ANAKPA URUAM
VILLAGE WEEDING THE ONLY ACCESS
ROAD TO THE VILLAGE



The women's siege of Chevron-Texaco terminus in Escravos

There is no such thing as women's issues- all issues are women's issues. Although women may have specific concerns relating to biology or lack of rights, they also share the concerns of all citizens. The much reported picketing of Chevron-Texaco Communities in Escravos (local name, Ogborodo) by the women of Ogborodo is an example of this fact. Communities are relying on women's roles as biological agents and community organisers to plan and execute protest agendas. Women organising to confront institutional oppression of this nature are motivated and pushed by the community, rather than by women's issues alone. However, it demonstrates the potential of women to influence the direction of policy in the Niger Delta when properly mobilised.

*Na woman dey get belle
but for Chevron na man
I don come join una get belle*

The quote above describes the experience and the reason for the take-over of the Chevron-Texaco tank farm in Ogborodo, from the standpoint of an Ogborodo woman living in Warri, Madame Afua Oriarifume. For 8 days in July 2000, over 200 women, both in and outside

Ogborodo, held the oil companies to ransom. The quote describes in a theatrical way how women intimidated Chevron staff during the occupation. “Belle” means pregnancy in Pidgin. This statement is a pregnancy pun, meaning it is normally only women who carry pregnancy, but at Chevron, men also carry pregnancy, and today I [women] have come for my [their] share of [the] ‘pregnancy’. The metaphor of pregnancy is used to refer to the folds, fat and pouches many of the affluent male executives of the oil company carry. It is an allusion to the decadence and aberration the oil companies represent to the communities, and an expression of the people’s disdain for unequal distribution of wealth. While the villagers are dying of hunger and disease their sensibilities are assaulted by men who have grown fat on their land; men who raise the expectations of the people then dash their hopes while exploiting the people’s resources to boot.

3.6 Health facilities

With the exception of Yakurr, which had a general hospital¹⁹, none of the communities we visited had a specialised hospital. The worst-case scenario was Ikolor where there is no health facility and women in labour have to travel long distances in boats to get to medical help. Ikolor women were also concerned about the high child mortality and morbidity rate. In Odi, the needs assessment team found that 3 years after the Odi state repression in the community in 1999 (Ekine, 2002), people are still living with the mental trauma of the experience which left many prosperous farmers and traders destitute. We were told about a rise in cases of high blood pressure and depression, which did not exist prior to the invasion of Odi but ‘came with the army’. This needs further investigation.

3.7 Poverty of Time

Apart from material poverty, there also exists a poverty of time. Women literally have a 24-hour clock, this leaves them little time to participate in recreation activities. Through their ingenuity the women do, however, manage to preserve the culture of the community, through age grade activities, dance groups, weddings and other ceremonies.

4.0 THE IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS FOR TRAINING DESIGN: Women's needs in the area of development, conflict transformation, capacity building and organisational development.

Women's practical and strategic needs: The capacity building intervention will have to address a healthy mix of community and women's concerns, which can help women transform personal and community life.

Capacity building intervention must link basic/practical needs with strategic needs. Basic/practical needs are linked to the global issues of poverty and daily survival of women and their families. They include clean drinking water, health care facilities, sanitation, market facilities, and micro-credit. Women's strategic needs relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control. Without control and ability to understand and take the right decisions - strategic needs - there cannot be sustainability of basic skills or tools. In this area, women in the communities we visited need skills to enhance their position within the community, build their self-confidence, raise awareness about their human rights and set up strong and sustainable organisations and networks.

It may be difficult for IA to intervene directly in the first area of needs (practical needs), which essentially fall under the remit development work. Working in this area may imply developing income generation activities for women. However, IA could collaborate with local and international development NGOs and UN agencies that are specialised in this area of intervention. The West Africa Programme could also develop an advocacy component to lobby aid agencies and decision-makers to support women's organisations in the Niger Delta.

The second area of needs (strategic needs) falls under the IA mandate and area of expertise. International Alert, through the Great Lakes Women's Peace Programme and the Women Building Peace Campaign has developed expertise on gender and women's leadership as well as on lobbying and advocacy on women issues at the regional and global levels. IA could also collaborate with prominent African NGOs and Networks such as Akina Mama Wa Africa and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), who have expertise on leadership training for women, as well as with Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) and African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), who both work in the area of women's human rights.

Gender and conflict transformation: Non-violent, high impact strategies of personal and community negotiating are important to conserve women's space. Furthermore, women need tools to understand and analyse conflict and their position within the conflict; to build strategies to address conflict, create peace and influence policies.

Networking skills to build human capital: Contrary to the Nigerian notion that the whole of the Niger Delta is one hub of activism against oil MNCs, not all communities are oil bearing communities. Odi in Bayelsa state and Yakurr and Obubura, both in Cross Rivers state, have no oil deposits. In Ikolor, Agip has 7 oil wells, but has not started oil exploration yet. In these communities, there is a lack of awareness of the environmental dangers oil exploration has caused their neighbours in Iko and Egiland, for example. Networks must be developed to share experiences and to build human capital.

Transformative change: The experience of Ogborodo may be viewed as an example of women's ability to facilitate transformative change. This is a positive development in the context

of local feminism. It is also a historical reference point as a non-violent means of resolving conflict, which the training needs to build on.

Empowering communities: the Niger Delta communities are a minority within Nigeria. However, there are communities within the Niger Delta who are in turn seen as minorities amongst Niger Delta communities. The selection process for training participants should empower majority groups as well as minorities within the region.

Transforming gender relations: Traditional rulers are the *de jure* custodians of the community, though youth have emerged as the *de facto* leaders. A training design must take into consideration the role of the traditional rulers, men and the youth, in the empowerment of women i.e. how women relate with youth and the traditional rulers.

Transfer of skill: Toward sustaining ideas generated through the workshop, there is the need for IA to incorporate a leadership grant through a competitive bid amongst participants. Such a grant will be utilised for the most critical need identified in the community of the trainee. IA's role will be to provide the funds as well as monitor their utilisation, and implementation of the projects.

5.0 TRAINING FRAMEWORK

Understanding Gender and Development:

- **Feminist leadership to equip participants with analytical tools of leadership:** There is a need to bring in gender dimensions to human rights. A vital component to this is women's human rights. Strategic thinking and planning from a gender perspective also demands grounding in the politique that gives that perspective its coloration- feminist values.

Gender and Conflict Transformation: Understanding conflict and peace from a gender perspective

- **Waging peace:** This has implications for the demilitarisation of the Niger Delta. The focus shall be: gender analysis of conflict and peace; analysis of the impact of Niger Delta conflicts on women and on gender relations; acquiring skills on mediation and negotiation; developing strategies to address conflicts, build alliances, influence policies and bring about social change.

Personal Empowerment

- **Personal development skills- health and population issues/ balancing roles:** Personal location is very important to a process of advocacy. It is important to look to issues of self-esteem, communication, reproductive rights and other basic personal health needs of the individuals concerned.

Advocacy networking

- Values that affect our lives are presented in the form of long held or codified norms of behaviour that shape our thoughts and attitudes. To begin to transform this in the interest of protecting human rights we must begin by an examination of the levels at which we find their values. The next challenge would be determining why those values are right or wrong (analysis) and then devising strategies to deal with them accordingly (advocacy).

Fund Raising

- Accessing human, material, and technological resources are a daily challenge for organisational development. This segment of the training will take participants through the meaning, sources and ways of sustaining resources for personal and organisational development.

Organisational Development

- Protection of fundamental human rights is best done using an organised platform. This is suggestive of the need to collaborate and co-operate with other persons or organisations, with similar objectives. This session will be concerned with helping nurture organisations, minimising threats and maximising the opportunities for growth within organisations and in a wider environment. Setting SMART goals, doing a SWOT and STEP²⁰ analysis.

Training of Trainers (TOT)

- Skills need to be evaluated and reviewed for transfer of skills to be sustained. The TOT will provide avenues for evaluation of achievements and challenges since the training. It will also provide opportunities for sharing strategies and techniques of addressing the issues.

6.0 STRUCTURE OF TRAINING

A group of twenty-five people belonging to non-governmental organisations and communities in the Niger Delta will be trained over three workshops, organised between July 2002 and November 2003. In between each workshop, the participants will go back to their communities to mobilise for peace and gender equality, applying the skills they acquired in the training. Following the first workshop, and after a period of 4 months (March), they will come back for a second training. This training will evaluate and review their skills, discuss achievements and challenges in light of their work on the ground, and build on their understanding and knowledge. The last training, guided by the same principles, will take place in July. This process, which is complementary to the TOT, will enable the continuous evaluation and review of participants' skills and knowledge, and ensure sustainable transfer of skills.

APPENDIX I: TABLE OF CONSULTATIONS

RIVERS STATE 14/07/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Egi Women council	Erema (Agricultural Community)	Onelga i.e. Ogba/Egbema Andoni LGA	Egi	Women active, Women leaders	Elf (Total Fina Elf)	Micro credit; Adult literacy programme; contract and employment for women and youth.	Group of women, one man
AKWA IBOM STATE 15/7/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Iko women's progressive association	IKO Fishing, Farming	Eastern Obolo	Andoni (Ijaro)	PDP one woman leader	Shell	Sewing, computer training, hairdressing salon, funds to operate their cold room, Micro credit, Skills acquisition centre, market	Group of women from 20-25, 4 men
Uchio Mpani Ibeno association (the voice of women)	Ukpenekang fishing & trading	Ibeno	Ibeno (Eket)	PDP one woman councillor, one supervisory councillor, 3 women in the village council	Mobil	Micro credit, training in fish preservation	3 women
CROSS RIVER STATE 16/7/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Grass Roots Development Organisation	Ofonbangha farming	Obubura		Women in village council. Women do not inherit farm.	No oil Company	Flooding a problem. Writing materials, typewriter, conflict resolution skills, and health care facilities	
NOSAD	Yakurr Farming b/v fertilizer maker	Yakurr	Ugep	1 woman councillor, 1 woman in transition council.	No oil Company	Diversify source of farming; women's Human rights awareness education for the girl child. Communication system, networking, solidarity. No hospitality facilities.	Group of women, one man

BAYELSA STATE 16/7/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Ikolor women's development committee. Fac: Unity	Ikolor; Farming, Population 3-4 thousand	Yenogua	Ijaro	No major reference to partisan politics women committee. Women interested in primaries 1999 (PDP)	Agip gave scholarship once	Flooding seedlings; Training in agricultural input application, wheelbarrows, toilets, pipe bone water. Renovation of primary school desks, need secondary school, electricity, pension scheme for the elderly.	
Odi community women's project Fac: Unity	Ebereze (odi town) Farming community cassava, yam, pepper	Odi	Ijaw	Women as voters. Young women contesting councilor	No oil company	Flooding, grain grinding machine, new agricultural inputs. Toilets, drinking water, fencing farm upland	All women's group

DELTA STATE 18/07/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Ubeji women committee FAC: Jerome Thomas	Ubeji Fishing, women now labourers on building site and traders	Warri South LGA	Itsekiri	2 women leading position in PDP	Shell & NNPC warri Refinery. Washing waste into creek. Opened cooperative account on advice of Shell but no Credit yet.	Want focus on women	
National Council of Women Societies: Uvwie Vanguard; CEDPA, Uvwie Chapter	Uvwie	Uvwie Local Government Effurun	Urhobo	PDP	Shell, Chevron, NNPC, Warri Refinery, Haliburton, Cakasa, etc.	Soft loans for women; youth employment; Skills acquisition for women and youth; need to reclaim their land from soldiers and Navy; need town hall; building of canals and waterways as they can no longer use polluted rivers.	All women
Ogborodo women in Warri, who supported women's protest	5 villages, make up Ogborodo (Escravos)		Itsekiri	"Na woman dey get belle but for chevron na man de get belle, I don come join una get belle." Madame Afua Oriarifume	Chevron. Scholarships given; Land compensation in Lagos but none in Escravos.	Minority attention: Delta a microcosm of Nigeria: people with will have no power and those with power have no will- Richard	All women, including Richard.

ONDO STATE 19/07/2002							
Organisation	Community Name	Local Government	Ethnic Group	Political Party	Oil company	Needs	Group
Arogo ljo lyoro Draw women society	Erogbo	Ese odo	No women in decision making. Men are not supportive	Chevron	Transportation by boat, typing, shorthand, photo lab and photography, health facilities maternity centre		All women, 2 wives of the king came, bottle of Gin given to king.

APPENDIX II

Niger Delta: training needs assessment questionnaire

I. Context Analysis

1) Socio-economic conditions and impact on women

- Could you tell us about your economic environment?
- How do you earn your income?
- What do you think of the oil activities?
- Have women benefited from the oil activities so far?
- What impact do the oil activities have on the communities, particularly on women?
- How do women perceive the oil companies?
- Is there any relationship between women and the oil companies?
- Do women get any income from the oil activities?

2) Environmental damages caused by of oil exploitation : impact on women

- What is the impact of oil activities on the environment in your community?
- What is the impact of oil activities on women's health in the community?
- Are there health facilities in the community?
- Where do you get your water?
- What kind of transportation do you have?

3) Women and politics

- How do women perceive the Federal Government?
- How do women relate to the Federal Government?
- Do you think that women's interests are taken into account by local government?
- Do women have any relationship with local government? If yes, of what kind?
- Do women belong to political parties? If yes, what roles do they play in the parties; do they hold key positions?
- Do women belong to leading NGOs? If yes do they hold key positions?
- What are women's perceptions of the issue of ethnicity; how are they caught up?
- Role of oil companies: do they use ethnicity and how?
- What is the impact of the military occupation on the communities and on women in particular?

4) Gender relations

- What tasks do women and men perform within the family and the community?
- Do women have access to resources (land, credit, inheritance etc)?
- Are women represented in decision-making bodies within the community?
- Have women's roles changed in view of the current crisis in the Niger Delta?

II. Organisational development and Capacity-building

1) Organisational development

- What type of women's organisations do women have?
- What are the structures of these organisations?
- What are the activities?
- What is the level of education of the members?
- What kind of problems do these organisations have?
- What are the challenges?

2) Capacity-building

- What skills do you already have to carry out your activities?
- What skills do you think you need to better perform?
- How do you think you could acquire the skills you lack?
- Have you ever attended training?
- On what have you already been trained?

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ENDNOTES

1. I.e. Oil-bearing states. These have also been described as the political Niger Delta (CDD Niger Delta programme 2002). The nine states are Imo, Abia, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom.
2. See Appendix I for communities visited.
3. See Appendix II for the list of questions
4. These were members of the network of the needs assessors. During the course of the research, we traversed four language zones, namely Ibibio, Eket, Ijaw, and Itsekiri, (Emem's ability to speak Ibibio, facilitated dialogue in Ibibio speaking communities); for the Ijaw and Itsekiri (Delta State), Jereoma Thomas, a journalist, facilitated while Mrs. Williams facilitated for the Ijaw speaking community in Ondo state.
5. Local communities found it strange that it was their own children who somehow never managed to pass the aptitude tests, even though they go through the same school system and curriculum as others who pass. The communities therefore began to suspect political manipulation to exclude Niger Delta youths from employment through the aptitude tests.
6. Yam is a major staple and income generating crop. We were told that certain tasks such as staking the tendrils, which are considered solely a male responsibility, are sometimes shirked by the men as a way of punishing the women. So in such instances the men clear the field and prepare the mound - one off tasks, thus leaving women with the multiple tasks and still end up with more money in their pockets after sales of the farm proceed.
7. These are the crops considered the sole preserve of women not because they are easy to cultivate but principally because they do not attract high income. Cassava interestingly is increasingly proving attractive to the men, since it has acquired the status of an export crop.
8. Oil spillage we were told from the people's perspective, occurs in two ways : spillage from accidents during transportation and washing of effluence (production waste directly into the river) such as we were shown in Delta state.
9. This came out of discussions with women only groups in Ubeji in Delta state and Eket in Akwa Ibom state
10. We learnt that in cases where the oil companies make amends through the provision of basic items of food and clothing to the community, majority of the women get less than a fair share while the leaders keep the bulk of the provisions.
11. This was of course not entirely true as we subsequently learnt from the inhabitants of the particular communities.
12. Shell operates in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo, Rivers and Cross Rivers states, while Mobil operates only in Akwa Ibom.
13. In September 1957, the Rt. Hon. Alan Lennox-Boyd, then Secretary of State for the British colonies appointed Sir Henry Willink (Chairman) and three others to a commission to inquire into the fears of the minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, and make appropriate recommendations. Following their enquiries, Willink and his colleagues reported that the Niger Delta region was 'poor, backward, and neglected'. The commission further observed that that 'we consider that a case has been made out for a special treatment of these areas' (p. 42)...The OMPADEC which had earlier been preceded by the Niger Delta as a special area, culminated in the creation of the 1960 independence Constitution, the Niger Delta Development Basin Authority (NDDBA), 1976; the establishment of Special Fund of the Oil Producing Areas by the Revenue Act of 1981 and the Special Presidential Task Force for the Development of the Oil Producing Areas on the 1.5% special Fund (SPTF), 1989. See Horsfall A.K pp. 13-14. The derivation has since been increased to 13% and the NDDC has replaced the OMPADEC.
14. A journalist who tried to investigate this culpable act was prevented from doing so by the security arm of the government, while the PR unit also denied any such pollution. Our visit to the community however, confirmed the events, through the oil coating on the roots of the plants which survived the effluent, and the constant film of oil on the water, which only the rains regularly washed away. The effluent had been flowing for more than a year we were told.
15. In Iko (Akwa Ibom state) and Ikolor (Bayelsa state), we had a vivid experience of men usurping women's space.
16. One woman in Akure was accused of obtaining N7000 each from each women society in Arogbo community in Ondo state, on the pretext that she was a government representative. The money the Arogbo women were told was registration fees that would guarantee access to micro credit up to a tune of N200,000. Since 2001 when the women paid the money, they have not heard from this woman.
17. The National Council of Women's Society (NCWS) in Ubeji and Uvwie Effurun and the Arogbo Ijo Iyoro Beni (Arogbo Ijaw Women's Society) were examples of such societies.
18. The concept of uniform dress though largely a function of affordability, is not limited to affordability. It is also a function of level of organisational cohesion because even peasants groups are known to wear uniform to mark formal occasions. Such uniforms may understandingly not be as expensive as that worn by women who have better source of livelihood.
19. A Federal Government centre for primary and secondary health care.
20. SMART (Specific, Measurable, attainable, Realistic and Time bound), SWOT (Strength, weaknesses, opportunities and Time bound), STEP(Sociological, Technological , Economic and Political)

NOTES

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