

# Environmental Conflict Management For Eep & P Operations In Nigeria

Fidel M. Abowei, B.Sc, MAISD, Millionaire F.N. Abowei

Promotion Department Professor of Chemical Petro/Chemical Engineering Federal Civil Service Commission  
Rivers State University of Science and Technology Abuja, Nigeria. Port Harcourt, Rivers State  
Email: aboweifidel@yahoo.com, Email: fiboweng@yahoo.com

**ABSTRACT:** Nigeria's Niger Delta region, home to the nation's vast oil reserves but paradoxically very much underdeveloped has suffered different forms of conflict in large part due to the exploration, exploitation, production and processing of oil resources. These conflicts have not only affected the exploration processes of oil resources in the region but have also hindered human and infrastructural development in the region. Thus, it is the overarching aim of this research to understand how the incessant conflicts plaguing the region can be resolved and properly managed. In line with this aim, the research focuses on the sources, types, trends and causes of environmental conflict in the Niger Delta as well as an analysis of conflict management and resolution techniques that not only ensure safe and profitable exploration process and also human and infrastructural development in the Niger Delta.

**Keywords:** Niger Delta, Conflict Management, oil exploration, Nigeria

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1815, the world has been plagued with different forms of violent conflict. Figures from researchers have shown that from 1815 to 2012 the world witnessed about 560 wars and violent conflicts resulting in about 3.5 billion deaths [1]. In most occasions these conflicts were motivated by issues related to the exploitation and distribution of natural resources, ideology (Religious and political beliefs), sovereignty (territorial disputes). While in some corners of the world these conflicts were resolved peacefully, in Africa these conflict often transcend to violent confrontations. Nigeria is a very potent case study. From the north to the south of Nigeria, conflicts have evolved from secessionist aspirations (Biafra war), ideologically motivated conflicts (Jos crisis, Kano riots etc.) to resource/environmental conflicts (Niger Delta crisis) with differing dispute settlement mechanisms or conflict resolution techniques used with varying results. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION** OR what some deem conflict management emerged as a field of study in North America and Europe as a result of the two world wars and the emergence of new forms of conflict during the Cold War. Since the emergence the field, its techniques and mechanisms have been adopted in different conflict situations. Its success and failure has stirred up series of debates amongst scholars, policy makers, international organizations on the limits and strength of its applicability. It is fundamental to understand that conflict is a common feature in every community or society, and its origin has been traced to factors such as differences in political affiliations, differences in cultural appurtenance, economic or class difference and radical change in the social fabric of a society. Already known to be conflictual factors inherent in every society, these differences in turn transcends to the formation of conflict parties with differing economic, political and social goals [2]. As Ramsbotham et al. [2] puts it in Contemporary Conflict Resolution, "the identity of the conflict parties, the levels at which the conflict is contested and the issues fought over (scarce resources, unequal relations, competing values) may vary over time [and space] and may themselves be disputed". In line with this assertion, Bercovitch et al. [3] argued that, "conflict is normal, ubiquitous and unavoidable...[and] is an inherent feature in human existence." Derived from the Latin word *confligere* which merely purports "strike together" the definition of conflict has engendered **SERIES OF DEBATES.**

Empiricists advanced that "conflict...refers to the overt and coercive behavior initiated by one contending party over another" [3]. Lewis Coser sees conflict as a tussle over status, resources, values and power with each contending party aiming to overcome or eliminate its opponents [4]. In *The Analysis of Social Conflict—toward an Overview and Synthesis* [5] Mark and Snyder provided an expanded definition of conflict encompassing four main characteristics identified by Bercovitch et al. [3] as conditions characterizing the presence of conflict, of which is the participation of multiple parties, mutually incompatible goals, "a situation of resources or position scarcity [and the] presence of behavior that is designed to hurt or injure the other" [5]. This expanded definition applies to conflicts among individuals, groups and nations. Thus, it also refers to intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and international conflict. But how does conflict emanate? What are the types of conflict? What are the trends in Conflict in Nigeria? Answering these questions amongst several others is the objective of this write-up.

## 2. Sources of Conflicts

In 1965, Daniel Katz in *Nationalism and Strategies of International Conflict Resolution* [6], established a typology that emphasizes three main sources of conflict. Katz widely accepted thesis advanced economic, values and power as three main sources of conflict.

- **Economic Conflict:** Economic conflict involves the quest for scarce resources. In the words of Ron Fisher, "Each party wants to get the most that it can, [thus] the behavior and emotions of each party are directed towards maximizing its gains" [7]. These scarce resources include but not limited to water, forest, land, pastures and in the case of the Niger Delta oil. Within the context of economic conflicts, differences can emanate as a result of unequal distribution of the benefits of these scarce resources, mismanagement by one group to the detriment of another, unjust resources exploitation, scarcity of national resources often due to population growth leading to environmental insecurity etc. [6].
- **Value Conflict:** Value conflicts are as a result of incompatibilities in ways of life, different ideological appurtenances in terms of preferences, principles and social practices that people adhere to [7]. While this example of sources of

conflict extends beyond the purview of environmental conflict in the Niger Delta, it is and will always be a very dangerous source of conflict in Nigeria as a whole. In fact apart from the Niger Delta conflict, a large proportion of conflict situations recorded by the Nigerian state have been traced to intolerances of the social practices of one group by another. In essence religious conflicts, identity conflicts, ethnic conflicts are all examples of value conflicts that Nigerians can easily relate to [7].

- **Power conflict:** Power conflicts occur when each party or group wishes to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in a relationship and social setting [7]. It is impossible for one party to be stronger without the other being weaker, at least in terms of direct influence over each other. Thus, a power struggle ensues which usually ends in a victory and defeat, or in a "stand-off" with a continuing state of tension. Power conflicts can occur between individuals, between groups or between nations, whenever one or both parties choose to take a power approach to the relationship. Power also enters into all conflict since the parties are attempting to control each other [7].

Having emphasized the three main sources of conflicts advanced by Katz it is necessary to add two other sources of conflict such as Structural Conflict and ineffective communication. In terms of structural conflicts, conflicts do occur as a result of unjust and prejudiced systems designed to favor one group over another. Even if not designed to favor one group over another it can easily be perceived as doing just that by an aggrieved group [7]. For instance the derivation principle enshrined in the Nigerian constitution has been perceived by the people of the Niger Delta to be a tool used to deprive them of fully benefitting from their resources while at the same time favoring the Northern part of the country. Another example is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria. Groups such as Boko Haram have openly challenged the authority of the State for enshrining secularism in the Nigerian constitution. They see this as a tool used to limit or distort the practice of their faith and off course encourage perverse or sinful behaviors within their social confines. Miscommunication and misunderstanding can create conflict even where there are no basic incompatibilities. In addition, parties may have different perceptions as to what are the facts in a situation, and until they share information and clarify their perceptions, resolution is impossible. Self-centeredness, selective perception, emotional bias, prejudices, etc., are all forces that lead us to perceive situations very differently from the other party. Also, Lack of skill in communicating what we really mean in a clear and respectful fashion often results in confusion, hurt and anger, all of which simply feed the conflict process. Whether the conflict has objective sources or is due only to perceptual or communication problems, it is experienced as very real by the parties involved. [7] To conclude this section, it must be noted that most conflicts are not of a pure type, but involve a mixture of sources. For example, resource conflicts typically involve economic competition, but may also take the form of a power struggle and often inculcate different ideologies or political values. The more sources that are involved, the more intense and intractable the conflict usually is.

### 3. Types of Conflict

Having traced several sources of conflict, it is now important to highlight several types of conflict. There are different types of conflicts such as religious conflicts, ethnic or identity conflict, political conflicts, and resources conflicts. However, a more global and encompassing approach to understanding types of conflicts was advanced by sociologists on a group and individual basis. For the purpose of this paper the sociological approach will be adopted, nonetheless types of environmental conflicts will also be emphasized in order to put things in perspective. Let it be pointed out that environmental conflicts are area specific in the sense that the environmental conditions that give rise to conflict in the Horn of Africa are very much different from that of the Niger Delta, thus trying to provide a generalized type of environmental conflict is farfetched. However, if two regions share the same geographical specifications, resource geopolitical conditions and resources specific condition then there is the plausibility of having similar environmental conflicts. Conflicts from a sociological perspective are classified into four types:

- **Interpersonal conflict:** Interpersonal conflict refers to a conflict between two individuals. This emanates from personal differences. Human beings have varied personalities which usually results to incompatible choices and opinions. Conflict is a natural occurrence that at times helps in personal growth and fostering relationships with others [8].
- **Intrapersonal conflict:** Interpersonal conflict emanates within an individual. This type of conflict takes place in the mind of a person. Psychologically speaking, it involves the thoughts, principles, values and emotion of an individual [8].
- **Intra-group conflict:** This type of conflict exists among individuals within a social or political group. The misunderstandings and incompatibilities amongst these individuals lead to an intra-group conflict. It stems from disagreements between members of the group. The personal differences in terms of views and ideas which culminate in different personalities are always a source of conflict [8].
- **Intergroup conflict:** This type of conflict emanates from misunderstandings amongst various social or political groups within a community, a nation or a state. Of course these groups share different sets of interests and goals and when these interest and goals clash conflict emanates. Moreover, competition of resources or boundaries between groups can foster a situation of inter group conflict [8].

In terms of the types of environmental conflicts, four types of conflicts can be highlighted from stringent debates amongst scholars in the field. They are biodiversity conflicts, coastal zone conflicts, conflicts disproportionately affecting women and conflicts about air quality and noxious pollutants. They might not necessarily apply to the Niger Delta but these are conflict types that are very much related to environmental issues.

- **Biodiversity conflicts:** In Environmental Conflicts: Key Issues and Management Implications, Urmilla and Bronkhorst [9] argue that biodiversity conflicts refer to conflicts associated with issues bordering on wildlife and some aspects of biodiversity such as conflicts relating to the "conservation of protected areas and animal species" [9]. These conflicts are well known international conflicts thus

are associated with important regulatory and policy implications. Impacts on the natural resource base in terms of land clearing for the laying of oil pipes, drill cutting, ecological destruction through dredging, destruction of seafood's through oil spillage, environmental pollution through gas flaring are important considerations as well. Studies have shown that failure to enact stringent environmental management policies directed towards balancing the needs and interests of conservation and people will lead to conflict situations. For instance the exploitation of oil resources in the Niger Delta by the Nigerian government has severely damaged the farm lands of the people without adequate compensation to remedy its adverse effects—poverty. In turn some youths of the region resorted to illegal exploitation, thus further damaging their farm lands while others resorted to violence to express their grievances. Also linked to biodiversity conflicts are natural resource management conflicts (NRM). It has been pointed out that conflicts in NRM are on a rise and are increasingly complex due to the participation of various actors and an increased range of issues and management strategies. It is important to note that resource conflicts often transcend to violent confrontations which also transcends nation-state boundaries.

- Coastal zone conflicts: Conflicts in coastal zones, emanate from other forms of conflict. Urmilla and Bronkhorst assert that “coastal areas are unique in the dynamics they produce around environmental conflicts [which]...has to do with high development demands, high population density, environmental degradation and importantly, poor and disjointed management to balance exploitation, development and conservation” [9]. They advanced two important types of coastal zone conflicts. While one relates to ecosystem change the other relates to coastal development
- Conflicts disproportionately affecting women: Studies have shown that in a broader sense, women do suffer the most –economically, physically, politically and socially— from environmental conflict. Urmilla and Bronkhorst point out that “while the actual costs of environmental conflicts on women are multifaceted and hard to measure, women often experience greater food and economic insecurity, and are affected by unsafe or illegal practices” [9].
- Conflicts about air quality and noxious pollutants: This type of environmental conflict is seen through the lenses of the right of citizens to social justice and their right to live in a healthy environment. Although in most cases grievances are expressed through demonstrations to the corporate headquarters of multinationals or the mobilization of communities by environmental activists and local residents to assert their right through judicial means, there are also incidences of violent confrontations [9]. Environmental conflicts associated with air quality issues, such as gas flaring and illegal refineries operated in the swamps of the Niger Delta often also receive considerable media attention.

#### 4. Trends in conflicts in Nigeria

An understanding of conflict trends in Nigeria is a research work that calls for the inculcation of a historical approach. It is now an ubiquitous idea to assert that Nigeria is a country that has been plagued with different forms of conflict since the early years of independence. In the early post independence period, while the North and Eastern regions were are logger-

heads over the 1966 Major Kaduna Nzeogu led coup d'état, in the Niger Delta region Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro was leading a group of likeminded individuals in what is now known as the twelve day revolution against the Nigerian State. Within a spate of 6 years after independence almost every corner of the nation was in conflict. Since then the Nigerian state has been perverse with all forms of conflict. From the Kano riots in the early 80's, to the persistent conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and the Jasawa's in the middle belt to the ethnic conflicts in the south and what is now dubbed the Niger Delta conflict, Nigeria's penchant for addressing grievance with violence cannot be overemphasized.

- For the purpose of this write-up, the renowned Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Set (ACLED) [10] will be used to trace the trends in conflicts in Nigeria because it is uniquely positioned to highlight the temporal evolution of conflict, the multiplicity of actors in this complex, multi-agent environment, and the role of the state in engaging in and addressing violence. According to ACLED, “Nigeria is the fourth most violent country...when measured by the number of violent events; and the seventh most fatal over the course of the dataset's coverage (1997 – March 2013).” [10]

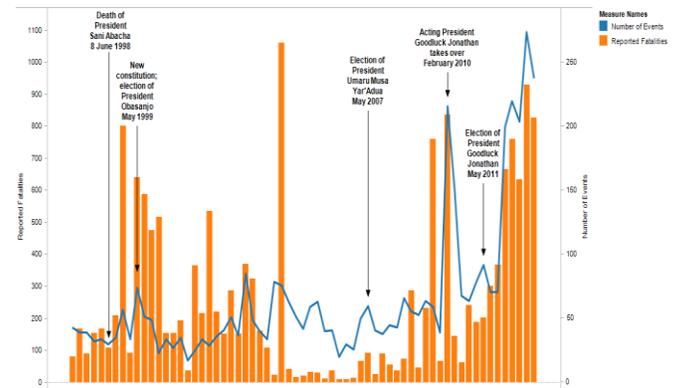


Figure 1: Conflict events and Reported Fatalities in Nigeria (1997-2013) [10]

Analysis of ACLED's data set reveals that between 1997 to 2009 level of violence and fatalities were relatively stable. However, since 2010 there has been a substantial increase in the level of violence. Spatially, Nigeria's violence is highly regionalized: different types of violence (battles, riots and violence against civilians) are dominant in different areas, and different interactions between violent agents engaging one another in dyadic conflict are also spatially distinct. For instance, violent Islamic militancy has been dominant in the north, Communal or ethnic violence has plagued the Middle Belt, the Niger Delta has suffered from resources motivated conflicts and off course there is a growing urban disaffection which is evidenced through street protests and demonstrations. [10] In order to understand the trends in conflict, we have to acknowledge the difference in space and time within which these conflicts take place. For instance at the height of the Niger Delta conflict, Northern Nigeria was relatively peaceful but at the writing of this paper the reverse seems to be the case. Violent Islamic militancy in Northern Nigeria As earlier stated, Islamic fundamentalism has always been present in Northern Nigeria. States such as Kano, Bauchi, Borno, yobe,

Adamawa have played host to Islamic sect over the years. In the 1980's maitasine an Islamic sect came to the limelight after several skirmishes with security forces and attacks on state institution. After the use of stringent force by the Nigerian government most of the surviving members of the group migrated to other states mostly in the North-eastern part of the country. In 2009 an Islamic sect known as Boko Haram came to the limelight after several years of existing peacefully in Borno. The reasons behind the present confrontation between the government and the group is well documented thus will not be captured herein. However, its continued attacked on civilian targets and off course government forces is today the dominant form of conflict in the North as shown in the figure below. [10]

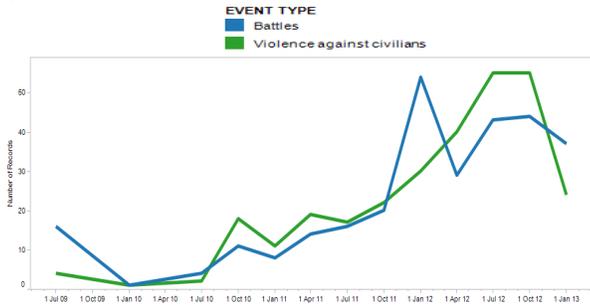


Fig 2: Boko Haram’s violent activities by type (2009-2013) [10]

Fig 2 highlights the activities of Boko Haram since 2009 when it first emerged. It reveals that since 2010 Nigeria has witnessed a resurgence of the group and a steady rise in casualties. In fact the table helps our understanding of the steady increase in fatalities (see fig 1) which coincides with the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as President of Nigeria. Communal Violence in North Central Communal violence— involving communally-identified groups such as ethnic or religious militias, mobs or rioters – has the highest level of fatalities per event of all kinds of violent interaction in Nigeria but yet constitutes only 13% of overall violence in Nigeria. In addition, high levels of fatalities linked to this activity, a high rate of civilian-targeting and its wider destabilizing impact on the politics of ethnic identity and power relations across the country makes it an extremely relevant category for analysis. Over the years communal violence has occurred primarily between Muslim and Christian communities and has been mostly centered in Plateau state. Communal violence between Muslim and Christian militias or mobs should not be treated as synonymous with Islamist violence; the former is perpetrated by communal groups without a formal structure or articulated agenda; often disorganized units or spontaneous mobs which enact violence either on communally-defined issues (for example, responding to perceived targeting by police forces; or demonstrating violently for recognition or treatment of particular communities); or against another communal group (for example, between Christians and Muslims). This kind of violence has an extremely high human cost, although it is only a small share of overall violence, it is typically extremely fatal. It is not generally strategically destabilizing on the national level – the low-grade, disorganized nature of the violence means that political and social elites are rarely implicated or involved in supporting violence directly (although there may be indirect support or promotion of particular narratives aligned with communal violence) which lowers the strategic stakes and reduces the likelihood of regime change or national destabilization resulting from such actions. [10]

zation resulting from such actions. [10]

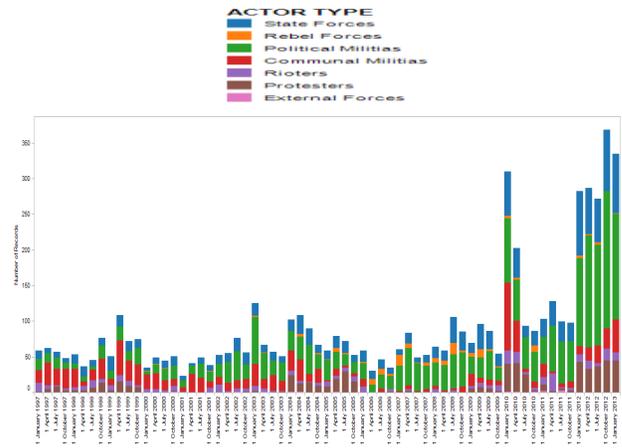


Figure 3: Conflict events by actor type (2007-2013) [10]

Growing urban disaffection Opposition demonstrations have increased in recent years and have expressed themselves in violence (particularly on the issue of fuel subsidies, combined with very high corruption). In Abuja and Lagos, over 40% of conflict activity is rioting or protesting, while over the course of the dataset, over one-third of riot and protest events have involved violence. The government’s response to this unrest was to appease urban populations with unsustainable subsidies rather than taking steps to promote the kind of transparency, accountability and broader public ownership which might assuage some of these demands. [10] Niger Delta Violence in the Niger Delta is dominated by militant activity, and for that reason its impact on national stability is higher than militia and communal group violence elsewhere. It is high-profile, and has a significant impact on strategic planning, national stability, and economic performance owing to its targeting of oil facilities, international interests in the region, international civilians, and the highly organized, well-funded nature of the militants involved (linked to the high-value resources they target). Niger Delta violence peaked in the mid-2000s, and long-awaited peace was bought at the cost of a cripplingly expensive amnesty programme which – by the laws of economics – had to compete with lucrative alternative sources of income through illicit, violent activity, including civilian kidnapping, ‘bunkering’ oil, and other activities. [10]

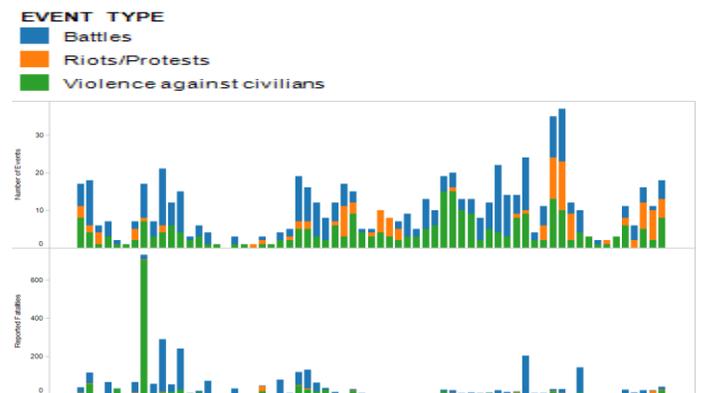


Figure 4: Conflict events and fatalities in the Niger Delta (1997-2013) [10]

While these trends in violence may not be exhaustive it at least provides an insight into the nature of violence Africa's most populous country is plagued with. One of the important points to take from this analysis is the differences in violence across space and time within Nigeria. While generally the nation is plagued with violence, the grievances of Islamic militant in the north are different from those that motivate communal clashes in the Middle Belt and off course grievance of the Niger Delta people. At this juncture it is important to examine the causes of environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta.

### 5. Causes of Environmental Conflicts in the Niger Delta

The conflict in the Niger Delta is well documented and has spawned different fields of study over the years. The marginalization of the peoples of the Niger Delta, the despoliation of their environment, unequal distribution of the benefits of oil, endemic corruption in the echelons of governments fuelled by oil money, militarization of the region by the state to protect multinational corporations and oil installations, denial of land rights are amongst the causes of the Niger Delta conflict. Incidental to and indeed compounding the ecological devastation suffered by the region due to oil production, exploration and exploitation by MNCs is the political marginalization and total oppression of the people and especially the denial of their rights, including land rights. In spite of the enormous wealth accrued from their land, the people continue to live in pristine conditions in the absence of electricity, pipe borne water, hospitals, housing and schools [11]. The Niger Delta, a lush of mangrove swamps, rainforests and swampland is the site of rich oil and natural gas reserves in Nigeria. Oil accounts for about 90 per cent of Nigerian exports and more than 80 per cent of government revenue. Despite being the richest geopolitical region in terms of natural resource endowment, the Niger Delta's potential for sustainable development however remains unfulfilled, and is now increasingly threatened by environmental devastation and worsening economic conditions [11]. Particularly threatened is the mangrove forest of Nigeria, the largest in Africa and sixty per cent of which is located in the Niger Delta. Also facing extinction are the fresh water swamp forests of the Delta, which at 11700 km square are the most extensive in West and Central Africa and the local people depend on this for sustenance [12]. There is no "one" specific cause of the conflict in the Niger Delta. What is deemed the Niger Delta conflict is as a result of the interplay of several causal factors. The harsh realities of the region translated into deep seated grievance in the people of the region. While some preferred peaceful protest and negotiations, other groups decided to express their grievances through the formation of militant groups and the perpetration of violence [12]. Nonetheless, from the realities on ground in the region and grievances expressed by militant groups, the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta are:-

- Economic and political marginalization of the peoples of the Niger Delta.
- Quest for resources control.
- Environmental pollution through oil spillage, gas flaring etc.
- Unequal distribution of the benefits of oil.
- Endemic corruption in the echelons of governments fuelled by oil money.
- Militarization of the region by the state to protect multinational corporations and oil installations.

- Denial of land use and ownership rights.
- Underdeveloped nature of the region.
- Dissatisfaction with the revenue allocation formula adopted by the government.

### 6. Conflicts Evaluation and Analysis

Conflict evaluation and analysis is the "systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict" [13]. It helps "conflict resolution organizations" as well as policymakers understand and properly approach conflict situations in terms of the context within which conflict exist. There are four levels of analysis in understanding conflict situations—local, regional, national and international. While each of these levels is often approached individually, conflict analysis attempts to establish their interdependence (see Fig. 5) [13]. It is important to note that in conflict situations; "identifying the appropriate area of focus for conflict analysis is crucial" [13]. This is due to the fact that there are differences in regards to the issues in conflict and dynamics of conflict at the various levels of analysis. According to the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, "in linking the level of conflict analysis—community, district, region or national—with the level of intervention, it is...important to establish systematic linkages with other interrelated levels of conflict dynamics" [13]. This is because of the immense importance of these linkages and the interdependency of the different levels of analysis.



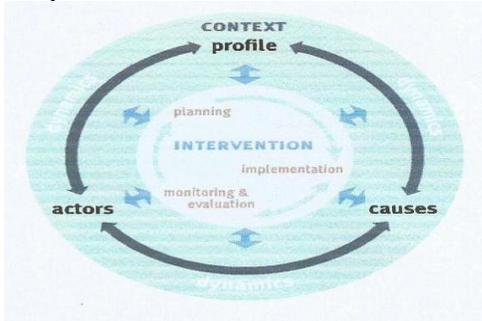
Figure 5: Interrelated levels of conflict analysis [13]

Conflict analysis is a major component of "conflict-sensitive practice", as it proffers the basis "to inform conflict sensitive programming, [particularly] in terms of an understanding of the interaction between the intervention and the context." [13]. In essence, conflict analysis helps

- to denote new interventions and also "conflict-sensitize" new and pre-defined interventions, for example selection of areas of operation, staff, partners, beneficiaries, and timeframe. This is known as the planning stage.
- to guide the interaction between the intervention and the context and "inform project set-up and day-to-day decision-making." This is known as the implementation stage.
- To gauge the interaction of the conflict dynamics and the interventions in which they are situated. This is known as the monitoring and evaluation stage. [13]

Towards Understanding the Key Features of Conflict Analysis  
The following diagram highlights the common key features of conflict analysis, which will contribute to understanding the interaction between the context and future/current interventions. The common features are the conflict profile, actors,

causes and dynamics.



**Figure 6:** The interrelationship of the key features of conflict analysis [13]

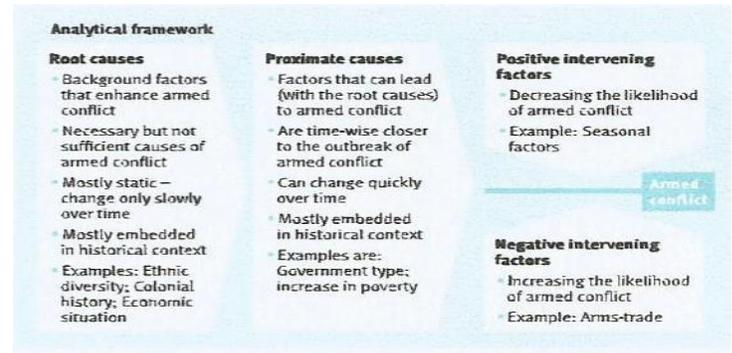
**Profile:** Conflict profile refers to the characterization of the context within which the intervention will take place. Key factors that helps guide ones understanding of the conflict profile includes but not limited to an understanding of the political, economic, and socio-cultural context, an understanding of the emanating political, economic, ecological, and social issues and conflict history. [13]

**Causes:** understanding the context of a conflict situation is primordial in pinpointing the causes of present and potential conflict and of course the plausibility of conflict resolution. Conflict Sensitivity Consortium defines conflict causes “as those factors [that] contribute to people’s grievances” [13]. It classified conflict causes into three categories namely, structural, proximate and trigger causes. Structural causes of conflicts are those that are ingrained in the “structures and fabrics of a society”. They can also be in the form of government policies that foments radical social disequilibrium within a society thereby heightening deep seated grievance. In regards to proximate causes of conflict, the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium refers to them as those “factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation, sometimes apparently symptomatic of a deeper problem” [13]. Finally, triggers refer to events or actions that set off violent confrontation or conflicts. However, it is important to note that during a protracted conflict new causes seem to emanate such as the influx of weapons from third parties and of course the political economy of violence. In essence an understanding of the causes of conflict largely depends on an understanding of the three categories of conflict causes discussed above.

**Actors:** In conflict analysis, emphasis must be laid on the participants or actors in the conflict. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium describes actors as “those engaged in or being affected by conflict” [13]. Amongst them, are institutions, groups, individuals and finally those engaged in conflict resolution efforts. It is important to note that these actors are one way or another affected by the conflict thus are very important in conflict analysis. Moreover they tend to have different interest and goals which in turn shapes their positions and relationships with other actors. [13]

**Dynamics:** The interaction between conflict profile, causes of conflict and actors in conflict is known as conflict dynamics. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium asserts that an understanding of conflict dynamics “help identify windows of opportunity, in particular through the use of scenario building, which

aims to assess different possible developments and think through appropriate responses.” [13] Scenario building provides an avenue for predicting future changes in events in a given context and within a specific timeframe. This is mostly encouraged by “building on the analysis of conflict profile, causes and actors.” The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium advances there plausible scenarios—best case scenario, middle case or status quo scenario and worst case scenario [13]. Before concluding this section it is important to provide an analytical framework for the understanding of armed conflicts.



**Figure 7:** Analytical framework [13]

## 7. Impact of Conflicts

The devastating effect of violent conflict is widespread and has a lasting impact. There are several effects of violent conflicts such as its adverse effect on human life, disruption of social systems, destabilization of political systems, significant socio-economic cost, human right abuses etc. Adverse effect on human life: Violent conflicts around the globe have shown that this nature of conflict obviously leads to the loss of human lives but usually leads to sexual abuse or violence, disablement, forced displacements, hunger and starvation and finally the spread of water borne diseases or sexually transmitted diseases. Even after the conflict “loss of life continues into the future with the spread of HIV/AIDS and the presence of landmines” [14]. Disruption of Social systems: The loss of human lives, the sexual abuse of women and more recently, the recruitment of male children as child soldiers adversely affect and destroys families and community life. This disruption is also often compounded with forced displacements and the loss of valuable properties [14]. Destabilization of political systems: Violent conflict negatively impacts the rule of law, democratic political processes, and the ability of the state to ably exercise its prerogatives. During violent conflicts, some citizens tend to exploit the state by engaging in corrupt and criminal practices. Moreover, “the influence of military actors rises [and] politically excluded groups are increasingly marginalized and targeted” [4]. Socioeconomic costs: The involvement of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan did not only cripple the economies of both countries but also played a large role in the collapse of the US economy in 2008. This is because wars are expensive. During violent conflicts, “infrastructure, capital stock and household assets are destroyed. [Moreover], investment declines and household and national incomes drop” [14]. It is important to note that the loss of livelihoods, which is as a result of the destruction of state infrastructures and natural resources coincides with the absence of employment opportunities, the inability of the state to protect its citizens and finally the inability of the state to provide services such as health

care and education[14]. According to the GSDRC, a research institute specialized in conflict issues, “socioeconomic indicators demonstrate that impacts of conflict include declining literacy, a drop in life expectancy and increased infant mortality. The collapse of education systems and the loss of educated populations—due to death or displacement—have negative long-term implications for human capital and economic productivity” [14]. Furthermore, armed conflict creates an opening for war economies or what some deem the political economy of war. This mostly involves trade in illicit goods for the purchase of weapons to uphold the war effort [14]. Weakening of Social capital: Violent conflict adversely impacts the social fabrics of societies in the sense that social relations and communal harmony are disrupted. The GSDRC argues that “while social capital within a group may be strengthened, social capital across groups is weakened by the destruction of the norms and values that underlie cooperation” [14]. Social-psychological impacts: It is well known that one of the affects of war on not just participants but victims as well is post-traumatic stress disorder. Post traumatic stress disorder “contributes to poor mental and physical health, reduced quality of life, and in some cases, greater difficulties in work, education and family life - and increased violent behavior” [14]. Rape which is a very common feature in conflict situations puts its victims in a very precarious state in that female victims of sexual assault are in some case rejected by their families and communities. Furthermore, children and youth are also adversely affected by conflict situations. According to GSDRC, “research has shown that experiencing violence at an early age results in higher risk of perpetuating violence. Feelings of humiliation and betrayal, and the desire for revenge, can also perpetuate a cycle of violence in which ‘underlings’ rise to power, engage in extreme acts, inflicting indignities on those who had done the same to them” [14]. Legacy of large-scale human rights abuses: In the course of violent conflict, there is often a break down in the rule of law or law and order which results in the rise of crime such as human rights abuses. In the case of civil war, human right abuses are perpetrated by both government forces and rebel groups as conflicts in Africa have shown. Thus, it is important that during conflict situation methods of protecting civilians are well adopted by warring factions. Failure to do so not only victimizes the innocent but also creates room for escalation as innocent civilians wrongly victimized by such abuses tend to pick up arms and join the war effort for better protection of themselves, their families and more importantly as a form of revenge [14]. Regional/global impact: Violent conflicts have a tendency of spreading quickly beyond borders encouraged by war economies which strives in the trade of arms, drugs and conflict resources. Moreover, refugees spill over the border. GSDRC reports that “Mass refugee migration in particular can place a large economic burden on host countries. Neighboring regions and countries may also suffer from damage to cross-border infrastructure and the environmental impacts of conflict” [14].

## 8. Identification of Relevant Stakeholders and their roles in conflict resolution

Traditional rulers, community leaders, community development committee (CDC), youth groups, oil companies, government, security personnel, conflict resolution experts and legal experts all have important role in the management and resolution of conflict. Each of these stakeholders has varying roles to play and they must carefully consider the pros and cons of

each possible option to decide which approach will best resolve existent incompatibilities. Traditional rulers: Traditional rulers command respect from their people and have considerable political and economic influence in not just issues bordering on their sphere of influence but on national issues. They have the ability to promote peace within and beyond their sphere of influence by properly channeling the grievances of their subjects to the appropriate authorities. Moreover, they have the power to exert pressure on government to address existing grievances before it translates into violent confrontations. Thus, it is in their interest to ensure that the rights of their subjects are respected by MNCs, government and security forces in the course of oil exploration and production activities. Community leaders: Community leaders are supposed to represent the interest of members of their community but this has rarely been the case in the Niger Delta. Most community leaders coalesce with the government and MNC’s to the detriment of their people and when their selfish agenda’s are not met, they tend to turn around and encourage or promote violence. Community leaders must channel the yearnings of their community to traditional rulers who in turn must find ways to see to it that these yearning are met. In the course of oil exploration in the region community leaders must quickly alert MNCs in the case of oil spillage and must see to it that members of the community affected are adequately compensated. Furthermore, community leaders must ensure that oil installations and adequately protected to avoid vandalism which leads to oil spillage and environmental degradation. Community Development Committee (CDC): CDC members must ensure that funds designated for development purposes are adequately used to serve that purpose. They must encourage dialogue amongst their members and make sure the interest of the community come before their individual interests. They must establish channels of communication with MNCs to address the grievances of their people and of course encourage MNCs to adhere to their corporate social responsibilities. Multinational corporations: It is well known that MNCs are major players in the Nigerian oil industry and have been partly responsible for the Niger Delta conflict. From incessant environmental pollution, the use of security forces during peaceful agitations by host communities to the use of divide and rule tactics in their relationships with host communities MNCs have contributed to the conflict in the Niger Delta in immense proportion. In order to promote peace in the region, MNCs must adhere to corporate social responsibilities as stipulated in international law and practices. They must strive to listen to the yearnings of host communities and address grievance through dialogue. They must ensure equity and fairness in relating with host communities and issuing out compensation package. They must ensure strict compliance with environmental laws and swiftly address issues such as oil spillage and pipeline leakages. Furthermore, they must contribute to infrastructural and human development in host communities through building of schools, hospitals and recreational facilities. Government: One of Nigeria’s major problems has been the absence of political stability. In a country that has been deprived of democracy and its founding principles, due consultation and deliberations before the enactment and execution of laws affecting the average citizen has since eroded. Land laws, principles of derivation and revenue allocation formulas are determined in the corridors of power without due consultation with the affected populace. Moreover, the Nigerian state has often used violent means to quell dissent thereby strengthening grievances and

in turn encouraging militancy. The Nigerian government has the right to pass laws that serve the interest of the nation but must do so after due consultation with major stakeholders and community representatives. While it has the monopoly of the use of force it must also exercise restraint during peaceful agitations of aggrieved citizens. The government must ensure that oil producing communities reap the benefits of their oil by dissuading corruption and encouraging cooperative social responsibility. Furthermore, development strategies must be developed and implemented in order to assuage the development deficit in the region.

## 9. Methods of Conflict management

Managing conflict is a process whereby parties in conflict are helped in reframing "their conflict," reshaping their perception of the conflict and obviously adopting a creative approach to address it. There are lots of emotions such as hate, anger and frustration in most conflict situations thus "part of the task of conflict management is helping people to deal with or overcome these emotions, so that they are better prepared to address the problems at the heart of the conflict" [15]. It is important to point out that behavioral patterns affect conflict thus conflict management "involves helping people to recognize ways of making their behavior helpful to resolving their perceived differences" [15]. Conflict management offers certain tools and principles for conflict transformation into a force for good. These principles and tools are often used to "strengthen the existing customary and legal mechanism for managing conflict" [15]. Engel and Korf argue that, "conflict can have constructive and positive outcomes, depending on the way people handle it" [15]. For instance, conflict situations encourage the formulation of sound policies, the strengthening of government institutions and processes so as to properly regulate access to resources. Conflict can also transform into an important force for change, because it alerts people to:

- socio-economic or political grievances;
- unequal distribution or inadequate access to natural resources;
- poor implementation of resource management policies or laws;
- environmental hazards such as environmental pollution, oil spill and gas flaring;
- Irrespective of the level of conflict, there exist different methods and approaches to peaceful resolution. The unpredictability of conflict outcomes warrant the use of result oriented or creative approaches. That is, while the use of a specific approach could bring an end to conflict situations, it could easily also lead to escalation if not creatively managed. As Ron Fisher argues, "this [can] involve a distribution of resources or power that is more equitable than before, or [the] creation of a larger pool of resources or forms of influence than before" [7]. It is important to note that the interdependent nature of the parties often creates an avenue for creative outcomes. For instance, creative outcomes are possible when each party poses a certain level of independence and autonomy "from which to influence the other, rather than one party being primarily dependent on the other." [7] Ron Fisher advanced three different strategies for dealing with conflict situations. They are;
- The win-lose approach: This approach is very present in our everyday life. According to Ron Fisher, "people learn the behaviors of destructive conflict early in life—

competition, dominance, aggression and defense permeate many of our social relationships from the family to the school playground" [7]. Thus, it is often assumed that one party gains what another party loses. The win-lose approach involves coercing one party to cede to the other. Of course there are "socially acceptable mechanisms" which allows for this. These mechanisms involve using the court systems (Judicial decisions), electoral process or through executive decisions of a political leader. The win-lose approach also extends to the use of threats and innuendo's. This method is synonymous with intergroup conflicts where the distinction between self and other exists. Fisher asserts that "the valued outcome is to have a victor who is superior and a vanquished who withdraws in shame, but who prepares very carefully for the next round". In essence, everybody tends to lose at one point or another. [7]

- The lose-lose strategy: This is a strategy that encourages a quick-fix approach. Productive conflict resolution techniques are ditched in favor of simple compromises. Ron Fisher asserts that "the creative potential of productive conflict resolution [is neither] realized [nor] explored [in this case]. Disagreement is seen as inevitable, so therefore why not split the difference or smooth over difficulties in as painless a way as possible?"[7]. The burden of definitely addressing the grievances of conflict parties is shelved in favor of a solution where conflict parties get "some of what [they] want, and resigns itself to partial satisfaction." [7] This strategy is argued to be better than the win-lose strategy because the cost is less for the parties in conflict. To sum it up, "neither side is aware that by confronting the conflict fully and cooperatively they might have created a more satisfying solution. Or the parties may realistically use this approach to divide limited resources or to forestall a win-lose escalation and outcome." [7]
- The win-win approach: Within the context of this approach, "conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather than a war to be won" [7]. That is the parties in conflict approach the issues of discord as a collective problem rather than pointing fingers at each other. Fisher argues that "the conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather than a war to be won" [7]. Methodologically speaking, this approach "focuses on the needs and constraints of both parties rather than emphasizing strategies designed to conquer. Full problem definition and analysis and development of alternatives precede consensus decisions on mutually agreeable solutions" [7]. The parties in conflict share the same goals and are in favor of long term solutions to their problems. They communicate frequently and avoid the use of threats and coercive behaviors. In conclusion, it is important to note that "the win-win approach requires a very high degree of patience and skill in human relations and problem solving" [7].

## 10. Benefits of Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Before listing some benefits of peaceful conflict resolution, it is important to note that peaceful conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation practices are based on the assumptions that parties in conflict are responsible and honest people, that they want a resolution of their differences, that they want to maintain an ongoing relationship (such as within the family, com-

munity, region, nation-state and in other organizations) and that they are willing to work with other disputants to find a perfect solution. Taking into consideration the Niger Delta conflict several benefits of peaceful solution to the conflict include but are not limited to:-

- Creating an environment for infrastructural and human development
- The absence of violence creates an enabling environment that promotes economic growth, good education and political and social empowerment.
- Protection of the social fabrics of a society by strengthening social relations and group trust.
- A peaceful solution to conflicts helps promote communal, regional, and global peace.
- A peaceful solution to conflict also helps in strengthening state institutions therefore guaranteeing the rule of law and assuring good governance.
- It creates an avenue for the equal distribution of the benefits of oil exploration.

## 10. Conclusion

The ubiquitous nature of conflict has made it ever present in every society thus the idea that a social environment can exist without any form of conflict is utopian. When the likes of Ramsbotham et al [2] argued that conflict is a common feature in every society they did so having carried out rigorous research work across space and time. The Niger Delta isn't any different. Thus, while this research attempted to provide further clarity on the concept of conflict in its varying forms, the overarching goal was to proffer solutions the incessant conflicts plaguing the region through the lenses of environmental conflict resolution and management techniques. The importance of Nigeria's vast oil reserves cannot be overemphasized. Not only is Nigeria a major exporter of oil, the oil sector accounts for 95% of foreign exchange earnings and 80% of budgetary revenues thus making Nigeria a rentier state. In essence not only is resolving the crisis in the Niger Delta beneficial to the Nigerian state, it is also of great importance to the people of the region and the international community duly represented by multinational corporations. As this research has shown, attempts at conflict resolution in the region must adhere to sound environmental conflict management techniques with all relevant stakeholders—government, traditional rulers, community leaders, community development committee and multinational corporation—playing a significant role. Furthermore, it is important to note that while this research might have explored avenues to resolve the conflict in the Niger Delta, it didn't go far enough as issues such as the intentional vandalization of oil installations by youths of the region were underemphasized. Thus, it is important that issues of this nature be further researched so as to reinforce already existent environmental conflict resolution techniques.

## Bibliography

- [1] Mbalamya, T.C. Introduction to Conflict Analysis, Prevention and Resolution. Master's Thesis, University for Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2012. <http://www.upeace.org/system/capacity/pdf/2012/> accessed March 29, 2014.
- [2] Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T. and Miall, H. Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Bradford: Polity, 2011.

- [3] Bercovitch, J., Kremenyuk, V. and Zartman W.I. Introduction: The Nature of Conflict and Conflict Resolution in The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution. Sage Publications Limited, 2009, pp 1-11.
- [4] Coser, L.C. The Functions of Social Conflict. New York: The Free Press.
- [5] Mark, R.W. and Synder R.C. The Analysis of Social Conflict: Toward an Overview and Synthesis. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1(2): 212-248
- [6] Katz, D. Nationalism and Strategies of International Conflict Resolution. In International Behavior: A Social Psychological Analysis, ed. H.C. Kelman, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, pp 356-390.
- [7] Fisher, R. Sources of Conflicts and Methods of Conflict Resolution. International Peace and Conflict Resolution N.p. . N.d.
- [8] Types of Conflict: Conflict Resolution, Definition of Conflict, Conflict Management Styles. Types of Conflict—Four Classifications. [www.typesofconflict.org/](http://www.typesofconflict.org/) Accessed March 28, 2014.
- [9] Urmilla B. and Bronkhorst S. Environmental conflicts: Key Issues and Management Implications. N.d, N.p, 9-30. [www.ajol.info/index.php/ajcr/article/download/63307/51191](http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajcr/article/download/63307/51191) accessed March 30, 2014.
- [10] Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset. Country Report: Nigeria, April 2013, [www.acledata.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ACLED-Country-Report\\_Nigeria\\_April-2013.pdf](http://www.acledata.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ACLED-Country-Report_Nigeria_April-2013.pdf) accessed March 30, 2014.
- [11] Abosede B. "Environmental Conflict and the Politics of Oil in the Oil-Bearing Areas of Nigeria's Niger Delta", The Peace and Conflict Review, Volume 5, Issue 1, pp 1-12 <http://www.review.upeace.org/index.cfm?opcion=0&ejemplar=20&entrada=107>, 2010. accessed March 30, 2014.
- [12] Ikelegbe A. "The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria". Nordic Journal of African Studies 14 no. 2. pp. 208–234 <http://www.sweetcrudemovie.com/pdf/njas2005.pdf>, 2005. accessed, March 30, 2014.
- [13] Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: Resource Pack, pp 1-121 [http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Conflict Sensitive%20Approaches%20to%20Development,%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20and%20Peacebuilding%20Resource%20Pack.pdf](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Conflict%20Sensitive%20Approaches%20to%20Development,%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20and%20Peacebuilding%20Resource%20Pack.pdf) accessed March 30, 2014.
- [14] Applied Knowledge Services. N.d. Understanding Violent Conflicts, <http://www.gsrc.org/go/conflict/chapter-1-understanding-violent-conflict/conflict-sensitive-development> accessed March 30, 2014.

- [15] Engel A. and Korf Benedikt. "Negotiation and Mediation Techniques for Natural Resource Management". Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 2005  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/a0032e/a0032e05.htm> accessed March 30, 2014.