

Governance of Oil/Gas Sector in Nigeria: Impacts on Water Resources in the Niger-Delta Region

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Given the persistence of environmental problems that characterise the oil producing communities (OPC) of Nigeria, often referred to as the Niger Delta region (NDR), this study examines the impacts of the governance of the oil and gas sector on the water resources in the region. The NDR is a coastal area that is most endowed in terms of natural resources including water, oil and gas among others. Paradoxically, despite the availability of fresh water resource, the region has been struggling with acute potable water shortage since 1980s. However, the continued exploration and production of oil and gas is having deleterious impacts on water resources which transcends government and oil and gas companies' efforts to address. This state of affairs which has been an issue of great concern nationally, calling therefore for the examination of the governance of the oil and gas sector with regards to water problem/contamination in the region.

Informed by review of academic literature, this study advanced an interactive governance framework (IGF) that promotes recognition and involvement of the various relevant actors/stakeholders, including the locals in the OPC. The study was conducted in two OPCs in Nigeria and primary data were collected through a total of 4 focus group discussions, 1 workshop and 25 in-depth interviews, including at least one representative each from 20 government agencies, one representative each from 3 environmental NGOs, one representative each from both a Community-based Organisation and Hybrid organisation.

Analysis of the data indicates that the governance of the oil and gas sector has contributed to water resources contamination, which has ultimately diminished the conditions of living in the coastal communities. The empirical evidence equally suggests that water resources contamination persists, because the locals in the OPC whose values, norms and principles are supposed to be considered in policies and decision-making are not fully involved in the governance process and the governing actors also lack the requisite capacity to perform. The study concluded that IGF is a good approach to address the governance challenges as well as the various environmental problems including the water resources contamination that characterises the oil and gas sector in Nigeria.