

## **MASSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN PARTS OF THE OIL PRODUCING AREAS OF NIGER DELTA OF NIGERIA**

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At the upland, lowland and mangrove swamp areas of Niger Delta of Nigeria, massive environmental destructions and degradation of air, lands, soils, surface waters and shallow aquifers, flora and fauna, infrastructure and aesthetics are occurring through the activities of oil companies and industries. Excessive flaring of gases result in acid rain and releases of volumes of noxious methane and VOC. The arising heat from flaring also damages biota and burn off lands and soils. Dozes of unburnt gases permeate the environment. Frequent oil spillages and discharges are common. Fossil groundwater, released from deep-seated subterranean reservoirs and aquifers are released untreated to pollute and contaminate the environment. Cutting down of vegetation along geophysical exploration lines, firing of seismic shots, movements of vehicles, plant, machinery and drilling equipments, dredging activities, etc. have wreaked havocs and damages to the biotic and abiotic environment. The soils have become infertile to agriculture. Fish and other aquatic lives have been greatly impaired or destroyed. Some of the farmers and fishermen in the area have been rendered jobless, and are being denied their means of subsistence. Surface waters and shallow watertable aquifers have been polluted and contaminated, thereby, rendering their waters not potable anymore. Flooding, soil and gully erosion and landslides are occurring, particularly during the rainy season, along the coast and inland. Colossal sums of money, lives and property are lost annually. There are high levels of discontent within the affected or threatened communities. The Federal government of Nigeria has been taking desperate measures to contain the socioeconomic-psychological problems that now pervade the distressed environments of the Niger Delta. Successes and failures have been recorded. The new democratic political dispensation as opposed to the former military rule has given more hope to the affected people.