

NON-STATE ACTORS AND THE HUMAN SECURITY DILEMMA IN NIGERIA'S NIGER-DELTA REGION

Zibima, Tubodenyefa

Department of Political Science,
Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State

&

Okoye, Anthony

Department of Political science,
Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

Abstract

The core relevance of human security is built on the existence and alleviation of threats and vulnerabilities that threaten the survival of the individual. To this effect, there is an extensive focus in the human security literature on the responsibility of state and extra-state bodies in protecting the individual from selected range of existential impediments to survival and dignified living. Nonetheless, such focus on state and extra-state capacity overshadows the significance of the role of non-state entities in affecting and influencing immediate and future outcomes of protection, empowerment and survival. This lack of focus on non-state actors is a dilemma for understanding human security outcomes in contexts of severe human insecurities and how individual-level actions evolve as a coping response over time. This dilemma is further highlighted in contexts of the failure of state-centric responsibility for which the Niger delta is a case in point. Using the theoretical provisions of human security, objective human and environmental conditions in the Niger delta and resulting individuals' coping strategies as a focal point, this paper engages with how the failure of state-centric responsibility and capacity shapes non-state and individual level actions towards everyday survival. The article finds that the individual's need for subsistence income to support subsistence consumption perpetuates prevailing vulnerabilities and human insecurities. The article recommends that state-sponsored strategies in enhancing human security must not only consider the environmental context but also the role of non-state entities in affecting overall human security outcomes.

Keywords: Human security, Non-state actors, Insecurity, Agency, Subsistence, Niger Delta

Introduction

The core relevance of human security is built on the existence and alleviation of threats and vulnerabilities that threaten the overall survival of the individual and his right to a dignified life. As Shani (2014) notes, at the root of human security is the reduction of the individual to a matrix of needs and wants, to be protected and empowered from a range of existential threats by the state and the international community. However, focus on state and extra-state capacity in the literature and

practice of human security overshadows the significance of the role of individual agency in affecting and influencing immediate and future outcomes of protection, empowerment and survival. This focus on individual capacity and human security outcome is even more significant in cases of severe insecurities that have direct impacts on everyday survival.

By looking at the embedment of the responsibility for human security on state, national and international capabilities, especially in contexts of severe insecurities, two relevant issues emerge for the analysis in this article. First is the implication of under-emphasizing the place of individual agency in relation to own security in actions geared towards everyday survival. Second is how state capacity to provide human security influences the nature of individual actions with implications such as creating or entrenching vulnerabilities and threats. This is the basis on which a human security dilemma is conceptualized in this article.

In situating this dilemma, the article focuses on the dynamics of environmental pollution and associated threats in select oil-producing rural communities in Niger delta. The article utilizes objective environmental threats and emergent contributory behavior to highlight the dilemma of responsibility inherent in human security outcomes, especially in contexts of severe insecurities. Whereas environmental security is only one aspect of the spectrum of human security (UNDP 1994), the state of the environment and its capacity to support livelihood, especially in rural contexts, has overall impact on present and future rural survival, wellbeing and productivity, issues which are at the core of human security (Khagram *et al* 2003).

In the context of Nigeria's Niger Delta region, decades of crude oil drilling activities have produced widespread environmental pollution with adverse impacts on traditional livelihood of oil-bearing rural communities. The environmental impacts of a seemingly unregulated crude oil extraction industry (AI, 2012; AI/CDHR, 2011) on one hand, and the dynamics of the emergence of a related artisanal and informal crude oil refining engaged in by these communities now systematically highlights this human security dilemma. The combined actions resulting in past and current sources of environmental pollution in these communities expresses the dilemma arising from the interconnections between state responsibility for enhancing human security on one hand, and individuals' responsibility to survival and self-preservation in the context of such insecurities.

Artisanal crude oil refining is an activity that employs a simple fractional distilling technique using metal tanks or barrels and open furnaces in refining diesel and kerosene from crude oil. This is a process that is environmentally destructive as it contributes to pollution of farmlands, fishing lakes and destruction of mangrove swamps. New threats from this latest expression of environmental damage in the Niger Delta appear to merge with and intensify pre-existing vulnerabilities, undermining prospects for improving human security (Fisher, 2011). Such dynamics have the tendency to result in a mix of social and environmental impacts in these communities (Kamlongera, 2012). What makes it significant is that even with the environmental externalities of artisanal crude oil refining, the activity is proliferating

across rural communities in the region, a major reason being that it is increasingly tied to the rural economy as it has become an alternative livelihood and source of income (Zibima, 2015).

Within the context of the ideals and responsibility for human security, this research paper posits that while the state may be identified to have relative responsibility in providing and enhancing human security, most states often fail in this responsibility due to reasons that may range from economic to political. In contexts where the state fails severely, individuals may consciously act towards enhancing own security, especially in conditions of severe vulnerabilities. From this position, the article argues that the capacity of the state and the actual outcomes in affecting objective vulnerabilities and insecurities shape the nature and outcome of individuals' actions and responsibility towards surviving and coping with human insecurities. When this happens, as is argued to be the case in the Niger delta, individual actions become shaped by motivations towards survival, as moral and normative concerns become influenced more by short-term material benefits as opposed to long-term sustainability goals (Zibima, 2015).

This crossroad in the interface of state and individual responsibility for enhancing human security gives bases to individual actions as expressed in mostly informal economic activities that systematically contribute to vulnerabilities and insecurities, thereby intensifying old threats and creating newer ones. This article puts forth the position that the dynamics of rural participation in artisanal refining, the economic role of the activity and the much more significant environmental implication represents a situation that brings into focus the outcomes of the roles of actors in human security.

The rest of the article is divided into the following. Section two looks at the concept, practice and limitations in the context of providing and enhancing human security. This is followed by a look at the connection between the environment and human security and the role of the state in the context of objective environmental insecurities in the region. Next we engage with the rationale and motivations for rural participation in artisanal refining and the dual implication of coping with and entrenching environmental vulnerabilities. We then look at the challenges and impediments to improving human security in the region. The last section concludes.

Human security: concept, practice and limitations

Human security as a concept has attracted much criticisms. These criticisms relate to the concept's theoretical, analytic and operational relevance, which have been extensively debated elsewhere (Owen, 2004; Newman, 2010; Alkire, 2003). The concept have been increasingly susceptible to critique given the divergences in the individual, societal, national and international variables in relation to what constitutes human security and how it can be operationalized and achieved (Newman, 2010, p. 91). This article takes cognizance of these highly debated points about the notion of human security. Nonetheless, the article focuses on an equally important point that, as will be shown, is intrinsic to the theoretical and practical utility of the notion of human security.

The concept's initial and most widely cited definition, and to wit the origin of most of its criticisms was that contained in the 1994 Human Development Report. The Report conceptualized human security as "first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression... second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life- whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (UNDP 1994, p. 23). The Report goes further to categorize human security threats into economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political security. Each of these categories of security covers interrelated aspects of everyday living and significant to dignified existence.

With the United Nations committed to 'discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly' in one of its resolutions, a 'common understanding of human security' was posited as the 'right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair'. It goes further to state that 'All individuals are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential' (United Nations General Assembly, 2012, A/Res/60/1; Shani, 2014). This conception very much reflects the conclusion of the Commission on Human Security (CHS), which conceptualized human security as "freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's on behalf, aided by protection and empowerment from the state" (Commission on Human Security 2003, p. 10). Common themes reinforced by the various definitions of human security are the emphases on security in people-centered terms (Attuquayefio, 2013), human security as entitlement, as well as state national and international responsibility for providing and enhancing human security.

The relevance of human security is built on the existence of threats and vulnerabilities that threaten the political, social, economic and environmental survival of the individual. Notably, conceptions of human security single out the role of states and governments in eliminating these threats and vulnerabilities as well as providing the supporting conditions and opportunities for individuals to overcome these threats. The protection and empowerment of individuals become duties of the state and its institutions. In this regard, human security alludes to a state-driven broad, emancipatory process that is geared towards the expansion of individual choices, capabilities and opportunities (Anderson, 2014; Mine 2014).

Intrinsically, such a framework and focus highlights and emphasizes a provision of security and opportunities for those at the bottom, but produced from above. On a broader spectrum, this focus on state capacity has also tended to lend human security to co-option into the traditional security paradigm to which it originally seeks to divest from (Shani 2014), the expressive focus on the place and role of the state in relation to the individual, security-wise. Essentially, the concept recognizes to some level the responsibility of individuals to their own security and survival...the '*freedom to take action on one's on behalf*'; ironically, the feasibility of this is hinged on the state providing the necessary conditions, processes and acts of empowerment, which are only ideals in contexts of severe vulnerabilities and state failure. Even with the state-centric focus of the theoretical and practical aspects of

human security, questions have always arisen on state capacity, a fact that informs the relevance of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Nonetheless, even with the focus on state capacity to provide protection and of institutions to provide empowerment, eventual outcomes depend on the societal context on one hand, and the categories and degrees of human insecurity on the other hand.

However, focus on state and extra-state capacity in the literature and practice of human security in providing the enabling environment have continually overshadowed the significance of the role of individual agency in affecting and influencing immediate and future outcomes of protection, empowerment and survival when faced with threats and vulnerabilities. This brings into question the agency of individual capabilities in taking action on one's own behalf, within specific geographic and societal contexts and in the face of identified threats and vulnerabilities.

In the context of the Niger delta, the focus on state capacity for providing human security and eventual outcome leads to issues that revolve around the interface between (i) the responsibility of the state to individuals' human security and (ii) the responsibility of individuals to their own security; analyzed within the context of objective human insecurities in the region. Noteworthy is how divorcing responsibility (state and individual) impact on objective human insecurity. In a context where state capacity is inadequate, focus needs to be placed on how individuals' perception of their responsibility to surviving and adapting to social and economic vulnerabilities impact on the nature and degree of human insecurity. How are individuals' perception and actions towards their own survival influenced by state capacity and institutional capability to protect them from threats and vulnerabilities? Also taking cognizance of the importance of empowerment in taking action on one's own behalf, how do individuals' actions towards self-empowerment shape contexts of vulnerability and threats to present and future survival?

This article deals with these issues as a dilemma of the prevailing focus on state capacity and contextual significance of human insecurities. The article utilizes these issues as the conceptual framework for analysis and uses field data to provide answers in two dimensions. The first is the contextual and practical disconnects between state and individual responsibility to human security. The second is how individual perceptions of survival and surviving influence actions that impact on degrees of vulnerability and human insecurity.

The environment and human security: state responsibility and capacity in the context of the Niger Delta

There is an important fact to note about the Nigerian state and its capacity to ameliorate human insecurities, especially environmental pollution and vulnerabilities associated with crude oil extraction in the Niger delta. It is not that managing pollution and regulating extraction processes are institutionally impossible, of course there exists a plethora of legal provisions and environmental regulatory institutions in force in the country. The problem lies in the fact that in relation to crude oil and operating multinational companies, the Nigerian state is rentier and uninterested in

issues outside oil revenue. For example, one can make comparisons in industry best practices by these same Multinational companies in countries such as Canada and the United States as well as the nature of responses in cases of spillage and pollution. In this regard, outside oil revenue, the state has done little in the interest of the primary population whose lands oil is extracted and whose livelihoods are directly affected by pollution. The nature and direction of state interest is as such responsible for human insecurities that are embedded in and emerging from environmental vulnerabilities caused by crude oil pollution.

As it is, vulnerabilities arising from environmental damage can have significant impacts on rural dwellers as it not only can affect the quality of natural resources but also alter local dynamics of access to such resources on which livelihood and survival depend. Khagram, Clark and Raad (2003) capture this linkage when they noted that aspects of human security are tied to people's access to natural resources and exposures to environmental change, while at the same time environmental change is directly and indirectly affected by human activities. In this light, when communities' access to natural resources become vulnerable in the face of increasing environmental change, which conversely leads to a situation where communal livelihood activities also directly and inherently contribute to significant environmental damage, the pathways to a "human security crisis" become imminent.

This relationship between the environment and human security has significant impacts on "the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity" (CHS, 2003, p. 4). The outcome of this relationship has the tendency either to enhance or negatively affect wellbeing of rural dwellers depending on contextual and institutional factors. For communities where livelihoods depend significantly on environmental resources, the impacts of environmental change on human security can depend on the nature of structures and institutions that regulate not only access to said natural and environmental resources, but also the impact of access on the natural environment itself. More so, structures and institutions determine the means and ways individuals and communities adapt, cope and respond to threats such as environmental change. Institutional efficacy as such becomes paramount, whether it provides opportunities and processes for adaptation and how this affects rural vulnerabilities. As Gomez and Saito (2012) highlighted, a significant way of understanding efforts at human security is by evaluating the impact on specific populations. Also, the absence or failure of efforts at mitigating threats and risks can be utilized as a means of understanding the trajectory of vulnerability, especially in contexts of severe environmental threats.

The Nigerian state, crude oil and human insecurity in the Niger delta

The bulk of Nigeria's crude oil is extracted in the Niger delta. With the first discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in 1956, the industry has grown to a daily output of 2 million barrels of crude oil per day (2m/bpd). Also, the industry is centrally controlled and implemented through joint venture agreements with multinational oil companies. It has been noted that centralized resource management has the tendency to lead to resource-use conflicts, while creating newer problems in

the process (Akbulut and Soylu, 2012). This is attributed to the fact that such centralized management leads to inequitable outcomes due to failure to address issues of regulation and environmental impact at both the institutional and local levels.

The centralized control of crude oil resources and by extension oil revenue is very significant, especially when attention is drawn to the fact that the primary responsibility for providing and ensuring human security is on national governments. As such, the government's capability, political prioritization, and utilization of assets and opportunities are largely responsible for human security outcomes (Bronkhorst, 2011; Owen 2004). In the Niger delta context, oil as a national resource, the role of the government in the dynamics of its extraction, and the utilization of oil revenue are at the roots of the state of human insecurity in the Niger delta. This arises from the significance of the budgetary influence of crude oil revenue and its direct impacts on the ability of the Nigerian state to fulfill her social obligations. This strategic implication stems from the fact that "crude oil receipts provide 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and about 80% of budgetary revenue, with export receipts of about \$90b in 2011 only" (CBN, 2012, p. 13).

Such massive oil revenue, and the objective realities in rural communities where direct oil extraction takes place, highlights the paradox of poverty amidst plenty in the region (UNDP 2006). The Harmonized Nigeria Living Standard Survey pegs the average household size at 6 per household with those living below the poverty line of \$1.00 to be 67% in Bayelsa; 56% in Rivers and Delta states (HNLSS 2010). Federal statistics put the incidence of poverty in the core Niger Delta at 44% (Bayelsa State), 57% (Delta state), and 47% (Rivers State). The region has had an average incidence of poverty of 44.15% in the past 8 years with rural poverty peaking at 68%. A self-assessment/Perception index puts the incidence of poverty in the region at 74.8%, way more than per capita and income methods show (UNDP 2006; World Bank/NBS 2010). Intensity of deprivation is at 57.3% while the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) pegs the percentage population living below the income poverty line at 68% (UNDP 2013).

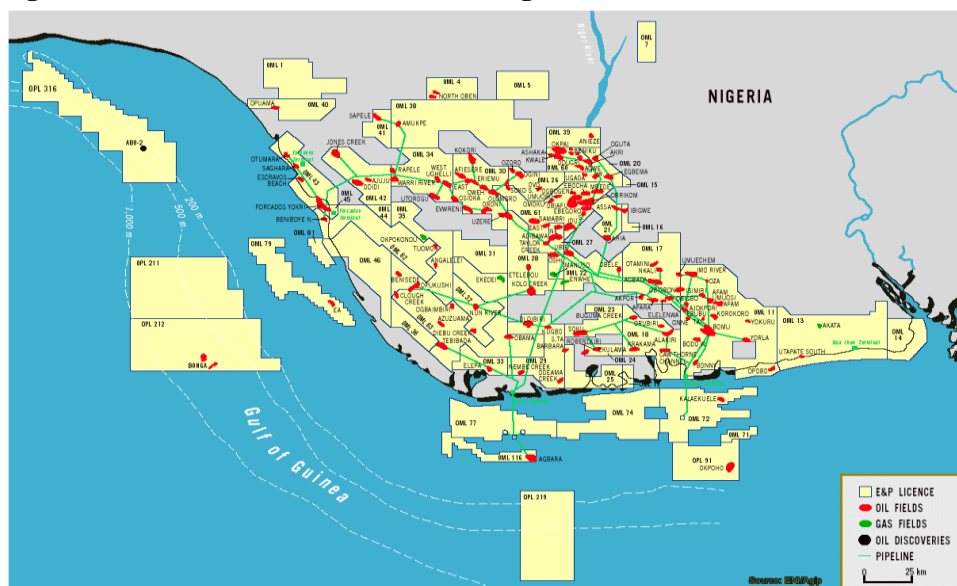
The failure of the Nigerian state to translate such huge financial resources into public goods, especially in areas where direct oil extraction takes place reflects a "crisis of development" (Ibaba 2005). The UNDP captures the situation when it maintained that the "appalling development situation in the delta reflects the uncontested fact that after half a century of oil *extraction*, the vast resources from an international industry have barely touched pervasive local poverty" (UNDP, 2006, pp. 1-2; Watts, 2008, p. 47).

Environmental pollution management and the trajectory of state capacity

Evidentially, decades of crude oil extraction in the Niger Delta as an aspect of national wealth creation in Nigeria, have mostly accentuated the prevalence of human insecurities in the area. The sheer size of the oil industry in terms of oil infrastructure further amplifies the significance of the role of government in creating the objective realities in the region. The Niger Delta hosts over 600 oil fields, 5284

onshore/offshore oil wells, 10 oil export terminals, 275 flow stations, 4 refineries and a Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) project (Lubeck, Watts and Lipschulz, 2007).

Figure 1. Oil field networks in the core Niger delta



Source: Pocsarovszky, 2010

The implication is that oil extraction and transportation in the region has, until recently, been the major source of oil-related environmental problems and challenge to individual and community survival. Economic sustention is increasingly impaired by the resulting scarcity arising from the debilitating effects of oil spills and environmental degradation on traditional livelihood structures. With the size of the oil industry and the slack institutional capacity for oil industry regulation (Amnesty International 2013, 2012; Pegg and Zabbey 2013), oil spills and resulting environmental pollution are endemic in the Niger Delta. It is a region that has been described as “one of the world’s most severely petroleum-impacted ecosystems ... where damage from oil operations is chronic and cumulative, resulting in a severely impaired coastal ecosystem and compromised the livelihoods and health of the region’s impoverished residents” (Amnesty International, 2009, p. 9).

Though figures of oil spills in the Niger delta are contested, records show that up until 2001 there were 6,817 oil spills in the region which represents an average of 273 spills per year for a 25-year period, with a loss of approximately 3 million barrels of oil (UNDP, 2006, p. 76). In the last seven years, the frequency of spills has increased with a total of about 3,482 spills as shown in Table 1. The data represented in the table also speaks to state capacity and the direction of state interest in the regulation of environmental threats arising from oil extraction in the region. For example, on the number of oil spills reported in the period between 2007 and 2013,

there are huge discrepancies between figures put out by the National Oil Spill Detection and Regulation Agency (NOSDRA) and figures reported by the Shell Petroleum Development Company. From 2007 to 2009, the number of oil spills reported by NOSDRA the state's regulatory agency, were 336 less than the 720 reported by Shell.

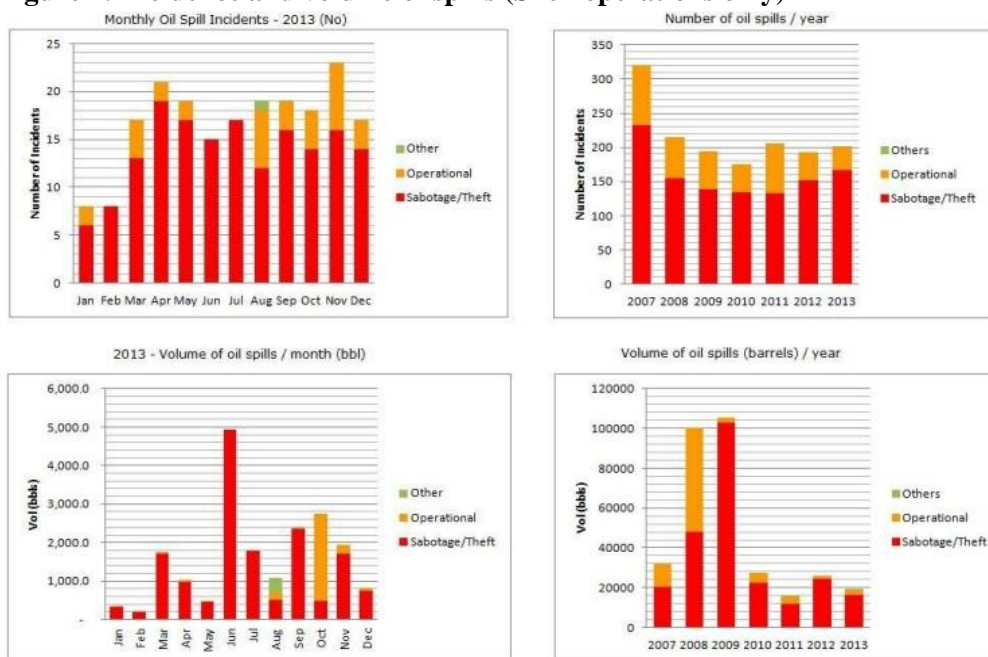
Table 1: Officially reported spills from 2007 to 2014

YEAR	AGIP	SPDC (NOSDRA/SPDC)*	TOTAL E&P	YEARLY
2007	180	171/320*	3	354/503
2008	235	95/210*	3	333/448
2009	258	118/190*	2	378/450
2010	323	188/170*	1	512/494
2011	400	207/207*	1	608
2012	474	207/192*	7	688/673
2013	471	138/138*	N.A	609
TOTAL	2,341	1,124/1,427*	17	3,482/3,785

Source: adapted from Amnesty International 2013

* There is a difference in reportage of annual number of spills between the national oil spill regulatory body and Shell Petroleum Development Company

As shown in Table 1 above, the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 recorded the most cases of oil spills with annual report of spill peaking at 608, 688 and 609 individual cases respectively. While individual spill cases differ in volume of crude oil spilled, when considered cumulatively against the background of the impact of crude oil on the natural environment, it becomes obvious the implication for rural communities that depend on natural and environment resources for livelihood. Even more alarming is the volume of crude oil spilled on land and rivers from Shell operations alone as shown in figure 3 below. Whereas this is but one operating company, the implication becomes dire when it is taken into consideration that there are about five multinational oil companies with extensive extraction activities in the region, all operating in an almost unregulated environment.

Figure 2: Incidence and volume of spills (Shell operations only)

Source: Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Nigeria, 2013

The magnitude of oil spills, the resulting environmental damages, the incidence of poverty it reinforces even with massive oil revenues accruing to the Nigerian state, highlights a significant fact: the failure of the state to protect rural dwellers in the region from severe and pervasive threats created by decades of oil exploration. Furthermore, the failure in empowering these communities to “develop resilience to difficult conditions” (Hasegawa 2007, p. 3; CHS 3002, pp. 4-10) arising from decades of oil exploration in the region have systematically created circumstances that have significantly contributed to the emergence of unsustainable alternative livelihood activities.

More importantly, the severely damaged environment, increasingly limited livelihood structures, the state’s failure to provide opportunities for sustainable alternative livelihoods and empower rural dwellers has systematically laid the foundations for these rural dwellers to adapt and develop resilience, by condoning and engaging in unsustainable livelihood activities whose environmental impacts are no different from the pervasive threats they have had to subsist in for decades. Rural dwellers now engage in livelihood activities that, in principle, reinforce conditions of human insecurity. In essence limiting choices to one where survival invariably leads to continued environmental destruction.

Human security, rural livelihood and artisanal crude oil refining in the Niger delta

The very core of human security is to protect individuals from severe and pervasive threats while also empowering them to develop the capabilities to adapt and overcome vulnerabilities that may cause disruptions in their daily life. In effect, the state and responsible agencies providing opportunities becomes a basic entitlement of those who are supposed to be protected by the state (Luckam and Kirk, 2013). As such, implicit in mainstream human security matrix is a supplier and a recipient of human security goals and outcomes. The Nigerian state in this regard is the supplier of human security, existing to protect rural communities from more localized threats such as hunger, diseases and environmental changes that affect rural livelihoods, while providing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods through empowerment. Nonetheless, while this mainstream matrix emphasizes entitlement with individuals as recipients, and de-emphasizes own responsibility, contextual and practical factors occasioned by state action have highlighted outcomes of individual responsibility to own survival.

Evidentially, the Nigerian state has not only failed continually in providing the enabling circumstances for sustainable living, the processes of the state's wealth creation have, over the years, directly affected rural livelihood structures. This has created the contextual influences that have systematically shaped rural concerns, habits and affect in relation to livelihood activities. In effect, with environmentally-dependent livelihood structures negatively affected and without support structures for proactive adaptation, the drive to survive have systematically led to adaptive responses that are now determined more by available and accessible livelihood opportunities as opposed to sustainable ones. This distinction between accessible and sustainable emerging livelihood options defines the environmental impacts of rural livelihoods and encompasses the implication on present and future survival and human security goals. The rationality and motivation of such adaptive responses are now structurally hinged on survival, and the impact on the environment sacrificed for short-term survival goals.

With the disconnect between the supply side and recipient side of human security and the gap between expected and actual outcomes in an environment of increasing livelihood scarcity due to environmental damage, individuals in these rural communities who have before now heavily depended on the environment now engage in artisanal crude oil refining. An activity that now supports subsistence and survival but also contributes severely to environmental deterioration (Zibima 2015; Stakeholder Democracy Network 2013). Artisanal refining has emerged as the more profitable livelihood activity replacing the less profitable traditional fishing and farming. Artisanal/illegal refining with its associated environmental damage have become the response of choice and a coping mechanism to environmental scarcity for these rural communities. This in effect spins a vicious cycle; prior environmental damage induces diminishing livelihood structures, a situation that now contributes to alternative livelihood activities that increase environment deterioration and worsening

environmental conditions and impacts on the level of poverty (Bhattacharya and Innes 2013).

Destroying to survive: artisanal crude oil refining as alternative livelihood activity

Rural participation in artisanal refining systematically highlights the dynamics of generating subsistence income to support subsistence consumption. The significance of the connections between subsistence income and subsistence consumption is ensconced in unregulated exploitation of critical natural capital and the environmental unsustainability of the activity. This is most expressive in narratives regarding the perceived costs and benefits of artisanal refining by participants and non-participants alike within areas of operation in rural communities in the region.

This emerges out of their comparison of the practical feasibility of artisanal refining in relation to its short and long-term impacts on rural livelihood and income. In an environment already compromised by anthropomorphic factors that alter the dynamics of traditional livelihoods, an activity embedded in the dynamics of environmental compromise becomes its own rationalization. When this activity in turn provides material benefits, it inevitably becomes a viable focus for livelihood mobility. Again, where the environmental cost of the activity is indistinguishable from existing damage from state-supported extractive activities, it only becomes more appealing to rural participants.

Adding to the feasibility and appeal of participation in artisanal refining is the fact that the activity's production origin is connected to long-standing economic and cultural production practices. Artisanal crude oil refining has its origins in local gin refining techniques and popularized during the crude oil insurgencies in the region between 2005 and 2009 (SDN, 2013). With improvements in refining techniques, level of output, and artisanal refining emerging as a major source of primary energy supply, it has evolved into a viable rural livelihood opportunity (Zibima, 2015).

The necessary question at this point is what has contributed to this outcome. While there are no extensive quantitative surveys capturing the trend of livelihood mobility in The Niger delta, data on rural perceptions about artisanal refining gathered by the author in a 7-week long fieldwork on artisanal crude oil refining in the Niger delta show that rural dwellers view participation in artisanal refining as the alternative to declining fishing and farming outputs. This movement to artisanal refining is expressed in the incremental number of artisanal refining camps in existence in these communities. However, while these camps are mostly owned by a few individuals in any one rural community, each provides employment opportunity for majority of villagers, having between 6 to 30 employees depending on camp size and output capacity (SDN 2013; Zibima 2015). More so, rural women engage in the distribution and retail of kerosene refined from these camps, as such providing alternative engagements.

From oil spill data and observations in the field, environmental conditions in the region make the prospects of traditional livelihood and rural sustenance in the Niger delta bleak, and was identified as a single major factor by villagers to have

negatively affected their fishing and farming activities, necessitating exiting to artisanal refining as an alternative, one with a ready market for its products as it services rural domestic primary energy demand. Records about pressures on the environment as it affects traditional livelihood also support the prevailing perceptions of rural dwellers. According to the 2013 Human development report, domestic primary energy supply (fossil fuel) stands at 14.7% of total production; natural resource depletion stands at 22% of GNI; percentage of available land area is 9.9% and population living on degraded land stands at 12% (UNDP, 2014).

The extent to which rural dwellers are willing to pursue alternative livelihood as adaptive responses, as such, have been largely influenced by the degree of vulnerability arising from environmental damage with roots in government's regulatory failure. This connection between environmental change, individual willingness, and livelihood mobility was the focus of a study by Daw *et al* (2012) and a correlation was found between environmental factors and propensity to move from a less to more lucrative livelihood. This connection was also found to be prevalent in six (6) oil-bearing rural communities (Lobia 1, Lobia 2, Azuzuama (Bayelsa State); Oporoza (Delta State) and Bodo, Kedere (Rivers State). However, while Daw *et al* point out that environmental pressure may arise as a result of institutional drives for conservative and protective measures, in the case under analysis, it is the seeming absence or failure of institutional efficacy that has increasingly generated the environmental pressures that have necessitated the shift in livelihood activities.

As such, the environmental damage caused by crude oil extraction and the pressure on traditional livelihood structures have not only negatively impacted on fishing and farming activities but have also created the opportunities and motivation for rural dwellers to engage in artisanal crude oil refining as an alternative livelihood activity. It is known that the environment can constrain as well as provide opportunities for livelihood. Where it constrains livelihood, adaptation usually leads to new livelihood activities that displace activities that are no longer profitable due to change in environmental variables (Mendelsohn *et al* 1994 in Di Falco, 2014). Issues that are of significance in such situations of livelihood mobility are not only enhancement to income but also impacts on pre-existing vulnerabilities. When considered in its dynamics, the situation becomes expressively a product of the paradox of the responsibility for alleviating vulnerabilities that threaten individuals' subsistence and the own freedom to take action on their own behalf.

Whereas artisanal refining provides improved incomes for rural dwellers, the environmental downsides are devastating and a potent source of environmental damage. A functional refining camp induces as much physical environmental damage as an oil spill site. For example the average monthly oil spill cases for 2013 was 16 incidents with spill volume of 1,600 barrels, for one out of the 4 major oil companies operating in the Niger delta (see figure 1). Consider the environmental damages from 568 artisanal refining camps identified in the period between January and March 2014 (Fox News 2014; Piracy Daily 2014), the implications of the activity on environmental resources and for human security begins to come into focus.

Comparatively, while either environmental damage from oil company spill or artisanal crude oil refining have turned out to be sources of veritable pressure on traditional livelihood and sustainability, it can be arguable that damage from artisanal refining is increasingly matching current annual oil spill incidences in the region. However, what is indubitable is the fact that artisanal crude oil refining as a source of rural income and as a source of veritable environmental damage presents a human security dilemma, in the context of livelihood, income and vulnerability of rural dwellers in the region.

The context for rural inhabitants' rationalization of artisanal refining

In effectively conceptualizing the rural concerns with regards the material and environmental impacts of refining, this article distinguishes between surviving and survival as two determinate issues of value to rural inhabitants in these communities. The rationalization of participation in artisanal refining, with its environmental implications is ensconced in the objective and perceived importance of surviving and survival as separate outcomes. Put in other words, it is a consideration of ends and means with reference to impacts on material survival and lifestyle. In this regard, surviving is conceptualized as driven by objectively short-term goals directed at staying alive irrespective of the means through which this is actualized; it is the consideration for a life better than the present, serviced by material income.

Survival on the other hand alludes to an ultimate outcome driven by future concerns about sustainability and a better world. It extends beyond just the individual and includes man as specie capable of recreating and improving his chances for self-perpetuation. More so, while we highlight the role of the state in contributing or alleviating obstacles to rural wellbeing and productivity, actual outcomes on wellbeing cannot be divorced from how said threats are perceived by the people who are most vulnerable as this factor in itself has implications on continued rural engagement in artisanal refining in the face of pervasive environmental damage.

Importantly, placing artisanal crude oil refining as a livelihood activity side by side with the degree of environmental damage it causes in the context of threat/vulnerability intensification, the evidence points to a conflict between surviving and sustainability. Actual behavior and response are greatly influenced by surviving and the need to produce material support for daily living. Rural value considerations support actual material benefits influenced by the need to survive the immediate, while overlooking actual costs with impacts on future survival and sustainability. In making this analysis, this article has drawn extensively from a field research on the dynamics of rural communities' environmental behavior to highlight the interplay of individual level factors in the consideration of the short and long-term environmental goals in these communities.

A recurrent theme in rural perception and response (Zibima, 2015) is a seeming lack of recognition of the impact of artisanal refining on the environment and on the severity of preexisting threats. However, rural recognition of corporate responsibility for decades of oil spills from drilling operations limits making generalizations about lack of information on the impact of artisanal refining on the

environment. How then does one explain this disparity? There is a saturation of views emphasizing willingness to participate and ease of access. Rural dwellers in the study communities emphasized the importance of “Our oil” as against concern for sustaining the environment, partially explaining engagement in artisanal refining as expressions of access to crude oil. This highlights the contradictions inherent in the centralized ownership and control of crude oil as a natural resource, given that accruable oil revenue hardly trickles down in the form of social provisions. This further highlights what Ukiwo (2009) described as the prevalence of dual conceptions of resource ownership and use in the Niger delta.

In essence, one can also attribute rural participation in artisanal refining to specific rural values and attitudes relating to accessing crude oil resources. This in turn emphasizes the role of the individual factors in exiting declining livelihoods and the influence of the will to participate even with the availability of opportunities for alternative livelihoods. However, it is conceded here that the data from which the attribution of values and environmental concerns in participation in artisanal refining will require further fieldwork to make extensive arguments and validation.

Challenges and impediments to improving human security in the Niger delta

Whereas there may exist immediate and remote challenges to restoring human security in the Niger delta, the more obvious immediate challenges are the direction of state interest and nature of governance with regards to crude oil extraction, and the state of the environment in itself. Nonetheless, the environment as a related impediment further complexifies the issue of human insecurity in the region when combined with the challenge of governance and direction of state interest. This complexity is connected to extraction as a major source of insecurity, and how the outcomes of extraction have evolved into phenomenon that influences action that generates vulnerabilities.

The challenge of governance and the Institutional capacity for delivering human security

The current environmental threats and resulting vulnerabilities are in effect products of low institutional regulatory capacity. Pursuing any strategic intervention to ensure sustainable livelihood choices will, as a matter of practice, require not only an overhaul of regulatory practices but also the dynamics of governments’ service delivery in rural communities. This becomes complex, as it will require political, social and economic reforms, currently herculean tasks given the governance problems on the country.

Most importantly, it will require processes that will ensure massive crude oil revenues are utilized increasingly to provide public goods and support opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. In essence, it will require measures that not only adequately combine protection and empowerment strategies in rural communities but overcoming the contextual factors that may limit possibilities of implementing related strategies side by side. However, this is unlikely in the foreseeable future given the rentier nature of the state and the level of corruption this fuels.

The dilemma this presents for human security in these communities can be summed up in the present and future implications of the failure in protecting individuals and communities from environmental threats. This is essentially a problem that is at the root of prevailing insecurities in the region. Correcting the situation and enhancing human security will necessarily encompass fashioning instrumentalities that will viably combine protecting the environment from destructive formal extractive and informal livelihood practices at the same time as protecting these communities from existing environmental threats.

The environment as an impediment for sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities

The potency of the environment as an impediment to restoring human security lies in its self-reinforcing features. The environment is the foundation of critical natural capital upon which traditional rural livelihoods are based. In this regard, any form subsistence livelihood takes in the current scenario, is related to and is affected by the state of the environment. As long as this is so, the dynamics of rural livelihood mobility and the factors influencing the transition from fishing and farming to artisanal crude oil refining will continue to have direct impacts on human security in these communities. The nature of institutional provision of instruments of protection and empowerment, access to natural and environmental resources and induced environmental scarcity all combine to contribute to human insecurities.

Given the environmental impacts of artisanal refining, rural communities are basically locked in a vicious cycle of diminishing resources and environmental pollution. Increasing artisanal refining while providing new income sources generates environmental damage and speeds up resource decline. Processes of current attempts at surviving the present and by-passing vulnerabilities results in the intensification of preexisting threats and vulnerabilities. Again, while the question of what can change the direction of nature of exploitation of critical natural capital in these communities, the need for change in micro-level behavior is dependent on the outlook of subsistence income. In the absence of the political will to protect critical natural capital, motivations and actions for subsistence consumption will have little concern for sustainability.

Objective realities in these communities have become expressions of a tragedy of the commons (Newsom, 2011). Diminishing natural and environmental resources and communal livelihood structures is leading to rural dwellers acting solely on serving short-term goals by further depleting already diminished environmental resources. This dynamics is bound to continue with two possible outcomes. A total breakdown and/or collapse of environmental support structures for livelihoods or strategic intervention to ensure sustainability over short-term goals. A collapse of support livelihood structures due to the contradictions in resource use spells a human security crisis, which in turn creates complications for any strategic intervention in a number of ways.

Diminished traditional livelihood sources, continued rural engagement in artisanal refining and the accruable income would only draw more rural entrants into

the activity. In such a scenario, the window for engineering sustainable alternative livelihood activities gets smaller with every new artisanal refining camp established as environmental resources on which sustainable alternative livelihood approaches can be grounded and directed becomes increasingly limited. The implication is a systemic environmental cataclysm in the region. A strategic move in stemming a possible environmental breakdown will be tackling artisanal crude oil refining from the angle of supply of raw material (crude oil) for refining activities. However, this cannot work in isolation as the human security implications run deeper than just the environmental downsides of artisanal crude oil refining. More worrisome for achieving any appreciable levels of human security within the context of pervasive environmental scarcity in the region is the fact that the federal government in Nigeria has no clear response to the mutually reinforcing environmental and livelihood issues.

Conclusion

Using existential conditions and the activities of non-state actors, this article highlights the dilemma or responsibility inherent in state-centric strategies of providing and enhancing human security. In highlighting said dilemma, the article proceeded with an identification of the limitations of the focus on responsibility inherent in the concept. In so doing, the article points out the nature of human security threats in the Niger delta, the degree to which they are present and being intensified and not only “how much these threats are recognized by all stakeholders” (Djuric, 2009, p. 542), as well as the outcomes resulting from the dynamic interaction of the actions of these stakeholders. In essence, taking the Niger delta as a focal point, the article brings out the salient point that the nature of human and environmental insecurities can be conditioned not only by state and institutional processes but also by non-state, individual level actions.,

Drawing from the above, the article makes the conclusion that more than the outcome of state actions, non-state and individual-level actions and responsibility towards survival have intrinsic values to human security outcomes. Whereas state and institutional capacities are often emphasized, these can and do in turn influence the emergence of individual-level impediments to achieving overall human security goals. This article holds that in the context of failure of state-centric responsibility and capacity to provide protection and empowerment, the nature of non-state individual-level actions may be driven by normative concerns with benefits for everyday survival and material income generation. Nonetheless, these have the tendency to pose serious impediments and challenges to future objectives of sustainability and intergenerational survival.

In oil producing communities in the Niger delta, individual level factors such as values and perceptions on environmental pollution within the frame of survival and sustainability are intrinsically veritable factors in the emergence and shaping of insecurities on one hand, and the possibilities and challenges in restoring human security. Evidentially, state and institutional processes that exist to enhance human security now give basis to conditions that impede conditions of human security. The outcome is one where human and natural interactions that are expressed in rural

communities engaging in livelihood activities systematically contribute to environmental pollution and scarcity, thereby intensifying preexisting threats to human security and survival in the Niger Delta.

The pervasive environmental damage resulting from an almost unregulated extraction industry, diminishing livelihood opportunities and pervasive rural poverty, point to a significant human security issue. Where state-centric responsibility for human security fails in enhancing protection and empowerment, the adaptive and coping strategies of vulnerable populations may not only result in endangerment of said populations but can lead to actions that reinforce the degree of endangerment. In the Niger delta context, the failure of institutions to protect, advance and deliver human security have engendered a constrained space for making sustainable alternative livelihood choices as the subsequent environmental pollution from artisanal refining now reinforces preexisting threats and vulnerabilities.

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