CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD: QUO VADIS NIGERIA’S DELTA?

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Abstract:
The intent of globalization is to establish a vibrant world economy that benefits all societies. But the exploration and exploitation of resources in Nigeria’s Delta by the western oil corporations can hardly be a democratic contribution to this process. The environmental policies and practices of the oil multinationals violate the tenets of global corporate social responsibility which corporations are compelled to observe in the western world. The oil-rich Nigeria’s Delta region is challenged by serious overlapping social and environmental problems. The debates concerning the Niger Delta seems to be a Nigerian state and oil multinationals in a high level official collaboration to frugally ignore the aspirations of the people. This is perpetuated without due regard to the sustainable livelihood and natural rights of the people.

Globalization seem to undermine the state’s capacity and legitimacy, thereby imparting and ascribing to its new purpose, new popular expectation. Just as NGOs have become a counter force to corporations, individuals and organisations have increasingly been against governments’ reception of globalization. Consequently, citizens and NGOs who are victimised by the state challenge the undemocratic base of globalization. The development of the Niger Delta has long been hindered due to a gradual worsening of environmental conditions by the way and manner corporate policies and practices are undertaken. The corporations have distorted or at least affected the development of the local economies and their ability to react to rapid global transformations. To a considerable extent, the ethics of the practices of corporations has potentially affected local sustainable livelihoods.

Using data collected during a recent fieldwork in the Niger Delta by the use of semi-structured and in-depth interviews with respondents being leaders and key actors in the various civil environmental organizations and also executives of the oil multinationals and the government agencies, the discourse will attempt to reveal the strategic underpinnings that have threatened development and sustainable livelihood with the locals caught in the web by the effects of corporatism. Furthermore, it will bring to fore how the Nigerian state and the oil multinationals have come to be under intense pressure from above and below, with an emerging and proactive neo-liberal agenda of NGOs’ involvement and civil activism.

In achieving ‘community best practice’, a critical analysis reveals that the role of the state has been frowned at with the increasing understanding of the vulnerability of the environment due to the unsustainable production activities and of human impact upon it in recent years. The paper ends by attempting to reveal how NGOs campaigning on environmental issues, and civil groups, have become an essential part of the social and economic fabric of local village communities like the Niger Delta, with consequences for its future development.