

Crude Oil Theft, Roles of Traditional Leaders and Development Implications in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Experience

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Abstract

The issue of crude oil theft in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has sparked significant concern among the government, university scholars, and various foreign organizations. This study delves into the multifaceted problem, specifically exploring the roles of traditional leaders and the profound developmental impacts arising from this detrimental economic sabotage. Using the Resource Curse hypothesis, the study examines how Nigeria's vast natural resources have paradoxically exacerbated economic challenges rather than fostering growth. It outlines a series of strategic proposals aimed at mitigating the phenomenon of oil theft. Firstly, advocating for the release of criminal records and the removal of corrupt officials could serve as a pivotal step in addressing this issue. Additionally, honoring traditional leaders who actively combat oil theft by inducting them into a hall of fame might motivate greater participation and commitment from local leadership. Furthermore, the creation of alternative job opportunities for individuals engaged in oil theft emerges as a crucial strategy. By offering viable alternatives, this approach seeks to redirect energies towards legitimate and sustainable employment, thereby reducing reliance on criminal activities. Moreover, the paper emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive value reorientation campaign. Addressing the societal drivers that incentivize illegal wealth accumulation is imperative. Implementing these proposed measures holds the potential to significantly curtail oil theft in Nigeria, consequently fostering an environment conducive to economic growth and development. By addressing the systemic issues underlying this challenge, the country can pave the way for sustainable progress and mitigate the adverse impacts of this entrenched problem.

Keywords: *Crude oil theft, Traditional leaders, Niger Delta, Economic growth, Development*

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Background to the Study

Theft of crude oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has become a significant concern due to its negative impact on the country's economic growth and development. Traditional leaders have been implicated in this illegal practice, raising concerns about their involvement in perpetuating this activity. The theft not only undermines the region's economy but also hampers efforts to establish sustainable development. Therefore, addressing this issue is crucial to foster a more prosperous and stable future for the Niger Delta's inhabitants and Nigeria as a whole. According to a former chairman of the Special Investigative panel on oil theft cited in Eromosele (February, 22, 23), oil theft stands as Nigeria's "most troubling economic debacle" in the 21st century.

Oil theft involves the systematic appropriation, pilferage, and redirection of crude oil – a valuable natural resource – for purposes that do not contribute to the state's overall growth. This practice ranges from illicit extraction within local territories to unauthorized loading onto vessels in undisclosed offshore locations. Identifying those involved in these activities poses challenges due to the collective effort required for execution. However, it is commonly believed that local artisanal refiners, multinational oil exploitation firms, and specific influential government officials are the primary entities responsible for this issue. Several studies have highlighted the implications of oil theft on social and economic development in the Niger Delta, including state insecurity, economic losses, environmental degradation, fire disasters, explosions, loss of life, and material resources. To address this issue, several measures have been proposed, including the release of criminal records, the expulsion of corrupt officials, the motivation of traditional leaders to combat oil theft, the creation of alternative job opportunities for oil thieves, and the reorientation of values to reduce the desire for illegal wealth accumulation. These measures are expected to significantly reduce oil theft and contribute to the region's economic growth and development.

Crude oil theft, also known as illegal oil bunkering, is the illicit activity of unlawfully appropriating crude oil from pipelines or flow stations, as well as the unauthorized inclusion of additional crude oil into valid cargos without proper documentation or accountability (Asuni, 2009). This practice has become the primary method of illicitly acquiring crude oil in the Niger Delta region, with the intention of utilizing it for both internal and export purposes (Wilson, 2014). The phenomenon involves the illicit extraction of crude oil or refined petroleum products from pipelines, followed by their unauthorized sale to interested buyers located at the sea (Ayanruoh, 2013). Commonly employed techniques for illicitly acquiring crude oil include puncturing the pipelines that transport the product between different drilling locations and extracting the oil at the site of the puncture or rupture (Adegbite, 2013). Barges, known as "bunkers," are directly supplied from oil company facilities and are connected to these concealed locations within the creeks and mangrove woods (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

The Niger Delta region is currently experiencing a concerning escalation in the frequency of pipeline destruction, crude oil theft, sea robbery, and various other forms of maritime

illicit activities. This has had a profound impact on the populace, the natural surroundings, and the financial system of the state. Researchers have observed that a substantial amount of stolen crude oil exists, with a relatively minor fraction being utilized domestically, while a significant proportion is traded or bartered in exchange for weaponry. The economic implications of crude oil theft in Nigeria are significant, and it is recommended that the government should take strategic measures to address this issue, such as building reservoir sites to store recovered and stolen crude oil.

Davis (2009) reported that in 2000 and 2001, approximately 50,869,300 and 264,322,734 barrels of oil were estimated to have been stolen, respectively. Asuni (2009) suggests that while reported figures vary, the estimated daily range of stolen oil spans between 30,000 and 300,000 barrels, with a value surpassing \$100 billion between 2003 and 2008. Ayanruoh (2013) further contends that Nigeria suffers an annual economic loss exceeding \$3.65 million due to oil theft. This illicit activity involves both local and international crime syndicates and significantly impacts the environment and socio-economic conditions in the region and Nigeria overall. The operation not only pollutes rivers and devastates farmlands but also depletes livelihood sources and heightens insecurity. Currently, there's an alarming rise in pipeline destruction, crude oil theft, sea robbery, and other illicit actions in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, leading to river contamination, agricultural land destruction, loss of livelihoods, and increased insecurity.

The first discovery of a crude oil reservoir in Nigeria dates back to 1956, with the inaugural commercial oil well established in Oloibiri, Bayelsa state, in the Niger Delta region. Nigeria's initial crude oil export took place in 1958, and by 1971, the country gained official recognition from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) for its substantial commercial oil supply. The Niger Delta, spanning nine states across the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones – Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers States – abounds in oil resources and is suitable for agriculture. Given its wealth of oil resources and ongoing operations, prioritizing attention to this region becomes crucial.

The Research Justification

The Niger Delta region holds significant importance in the context of crude oil discussions in Nigeria due to its abundance of oil fields. Specifically, the region encompasses a total of 606 oil fields, with 355 situated onshore and 251 placed offshore (NNPC, 2019). According to Ross (2003), a significant proportion of the Nigerian government's total revenue, ranging from 56% to 86%, has been derived from the sale of crude oil originating from the Niger Delta region since 1981. The assertion that the entirety of the Niger Delta region serves as the primary pillar of the Nigerian economy is not an exaggeration, particularly due to the consistent prominence of crude oil as the foremost export commodity. Hence, the justification for prioritizing the issue of oil theft in the Niger Delta region is deemed appropriate as the central theme of discussion in this academic work (Asuni, 2009). Particular emphasis is placed on the involvement of

traditional authority figures in the Niger Delta region in relation to the continuous issue of oil theft within their spheres of control.

The individuals who hold traditional authority positions are situated at the highest level of the community's power hierarchy and serve as the primary administrative leaders of rural communities (Asuni, 2009). While these groups get their legitimacy from their long-standing traditions and rituals, they also enjoy official recognition from both federal and state authorities. They are responsible for maintaining law, order and discipline among the members of their community, exerting influence on them throughout the decision-making process at the local level, and serving as a bridge between their communities, the government, and other local and internationally recognized agencies. It is imperative to acknowledge that their authority has gradually diminished over time as a result of shifts in the political landscape. However, these individuals continue to hold significance and exert influence in the realm of local governance inside their particular jurisdictions.

The significance of traditional authority as a type of lawful authority in Nigeria is underscored by the duties and functions it fulfills within its distinct areas. Traditional leaders play a crucial part in shaping the moral compass of society, often serving as esteemed figures who are highly regarded as exemplars within their own communities. Therefore, they play a crucial role in the establishment of societies comprising virtuous individuals. Additionally, they are regarded as spiritual authorities. They assume the role of custodians for traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices. The position being discussed holds significant importance in the current period characterized by globalization and the erosion of traditional practices. In addition to their numerous overlooked responsibilities, community leaders provide guidance to legislators on a range of governance matters, including economic policies, security concerns, and strategies for enhancing the welfare of individuals at the local level. The advice and guidance provided by their counselors have shown to be beneficial in the realm of local governance within our democratic system. An examination of the roles they fulfill within the phenomenon under investigation will facilitate the analysis of the issue from a grassroots standpoint, enhance comprehension of the extent of oil theft, and contribute to the formulation of enduring solutions to this problem.

The Nigerian State and Oil Production

Belaid and Abderrahman (2013), reported that Nigeria is the 10th largest crude oil producer globally and the third largest in Africa, with reserves amounting to 28.2 billion barrels. The country adheres to an OPEC daily production quota of 1.8 million barrels per day (Reuters, 2014; Elwerfelli & Benhin, 2018). Despite the considerable economic benefits derived from oil extraction in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria has persistently been faced with numerous developmental obstacles associated with this activity (Ikelegbe, 2005; Onuoha, 2008; Kasouris & Sayne, 2013; Erundu, 2015; Bieh, 2018). These challenges include inter and intra-communal conflicts, environmental contamination in the form of land, water, and air pollution, oil spillage, soil degradation, revenue distribution formulas, as well as incidents of oil theft and sabotage.

Oil theft, commonly referred to as illegal oil bunkering, has been a longstanding issue in Nigeria (Adekanye, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2005; Osah & Amakihe, 2014). The illicit practice of crude oil theft involves siphoning crude oil from government oil facilities, and it has been documented to persist on a daily basis (Raimi, Bieh & Zorbari, 2017). The phenomenon primarily involves young individuals who are viable and actively seeking alternative opportunities to escape economic hardships, particularly in rural areas. Rural populations are disproportionately affected by the adverse repercussions resulting from their direct exposure to activities related to crude oil theft and processing, commonly referred to as "kpo fire," which occur without any hindrance (Belaid & Abderrahman, 2013).

The development issues resulting from oil activities are events that occurred within rural social spaces, overseen by traditional leaders, despite the presence of settlements and traditional authorities within communities and societies (Belaid & Abderrahman, 2013). Contrary to expectations, and despite the presence of multiple layers of traditional authorities holding positions of power in the Niger Delta region, there remains a prevalent occurrence of illicit socio-economic activities in rural areas. These activities, including crude oil theft and artisanal refining, have substantial adverse implications for society, encompassing financial deficits, exacerbated environmental complexities, and heightened social tensions (Belaid & Abderrahman, 2013; Raimi, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Resource Curse Theory as its theoretical framework. Its initial proposition and application are credited to Richard Auty, a British economist, in 1994. Subsequently, Sachs and Warner (1995) gained widespread recognition for their work on "Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth," contributing to the popularization of this theory. Presently, this theory has garnered significant attention in Management and Social Sciences as a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the acquisition, utilization of natural resources, and the corresponding social dynamics. According to the hypothesis, developing nations abundant in natural resources and reliant on their export tend to exhibit slower economic growth compared to resource-deficient nations (Babeeb et al., 2017; Soremi, 2013). Scholars have applied this hypothesis to study specific resources like oil, gold, and diamonds, highlighting the anticipated economic growth and subsequent underwhelming outcomes in several resource-rich developing countries, serving as apt illustrations.

Nigeria typifies a nation linked to the resource curse, primarily due to being Africa's foremost oil producer. Despite substantial revenue from oil, the country grapples with widespread poverty and fragile institutions. Its federal government structure significantly diverges from global norms, lacking collaboration between the central government and federated entities. Mitigating the negative impacts of the 'resource curse' in oil-rich nations like Nigeria necessitates greater responsibilities for sub-national administrations due to their proximity to local populations and substantial economic and political functions within the federal system. Initially attributed to militant youths in

Nigeria's Niger Delta, oil theft served as a means of resource control, as evidenced by several sources (Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1991, Kiama Declaration, 1998, Urhobo Economic Summit, 1998, South-South Governors Declaration for Resource Control, 2000 and 2011, cited in Bieh & Boroh, 2020). However, continuous revelations challenge this notion, linking militant adolescence to non-violent struggles that escalated into illicit activities such as pipeline sabotage, illegal oil extraction, abduction, and pilferage.

Oil theft in the region escalates as a result of political agitation and sustains criminal gangs financially. Neglect of development and inequitable funds allocation by the Nigerian state fuel this political struggle. Corruption plays a pivotal role in oil theft, pervasive in the Niger Delta and Nigeria overall (Asuni, 2009). Kasouris and Sayne (2013) attribute corrupt officials' motivations to financing electoral campaigns, orchestrating violence, manipulating votes, and personal enrichment. Corruption, authoritarianism, and rent-seeking behavior are defining features of Nigeria's rentier regime, contributing to oil theft in the Niger Delta (Raimi & Samuel, 2023). Nigeria's governmental framework forms the basis connecting oil theft and pervasive corruption in the region.

History of oil theft in Nigeria

The phenomenon of oil theft in areas with oil resources is not a recent occurrence globally, nor is it exclusive to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This phenomenon seems to be prevalent in places where there is significant extraction of valuable natural resources, such as oil, gold, diamonds, and so forth, on a commercial scale. The occurrence of oil theft has been documented in Texas, USA (Telegraph, 1981). Additionally, Indonesia and Mexico have also encountered this issue (The Economist, 2012; Jakarta Globe, 2013). Nigeria is often regarded as the first nation in terms of oil theft, with a reported daily average of 50,000 to 300,000 barrels of oil being illicitly appropriated. In comparison, Indonesia's daily oil theft is at 1,000 barrels per day, as reported by the Jakarta Globe in 2013, while Mexico experiences a daily theft of 10,000 barrels per day (Reuters, 2013). Nigeria has been designated as the global epicenter of oil theft due to the significant volume of oil that has been unlawfully stolen from the Niger Delta (The Economist, 2012).

In relation to the aforementioned countries, namely the United States, Indonesia, and Mexico, academics attribute the prevalence of oil theft primarily to lax security measures and criminal activities. However, an examination of the research findings and perspectives of several authors regarding the causes of oil theft in the Niger Delta region reveals a somber and intricately intertwined set of factors that enable and perpetuate oil theft in Nigeria. Several scholars have expressed the view that oil theft plays a significant role in the economy of war in the Niger Delta (Ezirim, 2011, Obi, 2010; Watts, 2007). Conversely, there are those who link oil theft to the corrupt practices and inclinations of government officials (Asuni, 2009).

The phenomenon of oil theft in the Niger Delta region may be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, coinciding with the era of military governance in Nigeria. According to Kasouris and Sayne (2013), there are allegations suggesting that the theft of crude oil in

Nigeria was initiated by high-ranking military officers at that time. The alleged motive for this activity was to enhance their personal wealth and to ensure their political stability and significance. Nevertheless, this illicit behaviour assumed a novel dimension considering the Niger Delta's demand for control over resources and the rise of a new generation of agitated young individuals in the area (Ikelegbe, 2005). Initially, the agitation primarily had a political objective, as the inhabitants of the area sought to secure an augmentation of the derivation budget allocated to their respective states. Additionally, they aimed to address the dire living conditions prevalent in the region and advocate for the supply of fundamental infrastructure. Regrettably, the incumbent government exhibited the inability to accede to the requests put out by the populace hailing from the aforementioned location.

Consequently, a significant number of young individuals in the area resorted to armed resistance against the government and participated in various illicit activities, including but not limited to abduction, sabotage of oil infrastructure, illegal oil extraction, and maritime piracy (Ikelegbe, 2005; Ukiwo, 2007; Asuni, 2009). According to Ikelegbe (2005), the initial role of youth organizations in the oil economy was primarily focused on providing security, which allowed them to accumulate wealth and obtain weapons. This, in turn, motivated them to independently participate in the oil theft business within the region.

Actors in and scale of oil theft activity in the Niger Delta region

The term "oil theft actors" refers to individuals actively involved in or supporting illicit oil theft operations in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, oil theft has evolved into a substantial economic enterprise involving not only young individuals but also community members, oil company staff, security forces, high-ranking government officials, and foreign entities (Katsouris & Sayne, 2013).

Katsouris and Sayne (2013) emphasize that a significant portion of Nigeria's crude oil is pilfered on a large scale, often traded for weapons or illicitly transported abroad, with minimal domestic use. Oil theft manifests across various dimensions, resulting in varying volumes of stolen oil. This analysis identifies three distinct levels of oil theft in the Niger Delta region:

- i. Small-scale oil theft, historically prevalent, involves the illicit acquisition of condensate and petroleum products intended for local markets. Perpetrated by individuals within the local business community, this activity includes crude oil refining using indigenous technology, with resulting products distributed and used locally (Asuni, 2009; Stakeholders Democratic Network, 2013; Kuku, 2013 as cited in Udo, 2013). The challenges faced by multinational corporations and state security services in securing remote oil facilities have created opportunities for terrorists and local populations to engage in oil theft activities (Kuku, 2013 as cited in Udo, 2013).
- ii. Large-scale oil theft comprises connecting hoses to manifold or pipelines to extract substantial volumes of oil, which are then transferred to tankers, canoes, and barges. The stolen crude is transported to the open sea and unloaded into

larger vessels belonging to foreign partners involved in the illegal trade (Ikelegbe, 2005; Katsouris & Sayne, 2013). Collaboration exists among various actors at this level, including local youth, oil company personnel offering technical expertise, security personnel facilitating operations, and foreign partners providing market access (Ikelegbe, 2005; Katsouris & Sayne, 2013).

- iii. White-collar oil theft occurs at export terminals and involves technologically advanced methods to surpass authorized oil quantities by manipulating calibrated meters and falsifying shipping documentation. This complex form of oil theft necessitates coordination among influential groups, high-ranking military personnel, oil corporation staff, and top NNPC Ltd. executives.

Crude oil theft and the Role of Traditional Leaders in the Niger Delta Region

Given the prevalence of oil theft in the Niger Delta communities and Nigeria at large, it's conceivable that certain community leaders might be involved in these illicit activities. However, traditional leaders hold specific responsibilities in addressing this issue. Initiating action at the grassroots level is a commendable approach. Consequently, these leaders and their institutions bear pivotal responsibilities in curbing oil theft in their communities (Raimi, 2023).

Outlined below are the Anticipated Roles:

Traditional leaders, esteemed and influential figures who uphold societal norms, are tasked with dissuading constituents from partaking in crude oil theft within their territories. It's crucial for them to encourage ethical behavior and discourage support for illicit operations. Moreover, raising awareness among their subjects about the economic consequences of oil theft, both locally and nationally, is imperative. Collaborating with security authorities to secure vulnerable areas within communities is vital. Maintaining ethical standards within traditional institutions is crucial in preventing crime within communities. Consistent condemnation of criminal activities by individuals in traditional positions is vital. They must denounce illegal behaviors rather than endorse or tolerate them. Proactively speaking out against established criminals, instead of welcoming illegally acquired assets, may serve as a deterrent.

Collaboration with the government and security agencies is vital. Preventing community members from engaging in criminal activities (Ogadi, Raimi & Nwachukwu, 2012) that hinder economic growth is a crucial role for traditional leaders. They are a valuable source of information for law enforcement and government authorities. Law enforcement agencies' effectiveness depends on their cooperation. Traditional leaders' involvement in community security is vital, given their role as custodians of cultural values. Their intimate understanding of constituents and vice versa enables them to have a significant positive impact.

Development implications of oil theft in Nigeria

The compelling evidence suggests that oil theft significantly impedes Nigeria's national development. Termed as illicit bunkering, this phenomenon carries noteworthy adverse

repercussions for the nation, although the exact extent of unlawfully seized oil remains uncertain. The ramifications are not just profound but also widespread. Peterside (2022) highlighted oil theft as a contributing factor to the decrease in the nation's oil earnings. He cited a decline in Nigeria's daily generated oil barrels, dropping from 1.238 million barrels per day in June 2022 to 1.083 million barrels per day in July 2022. Peterside also noted its impact on NNPC Ltd.'s remittances to the federation account and a decrease in foreign deposits.

Echoing a similar sentiment, the former vice president, Osinbajo, emphasized oil theft as a significant economic challenge, affecting the revenue generated from oil (Eromosele, February 22, 2023). Eromosele (2023) further warned that without intervention, oil theft could worsen Nigeria's financial crisis, diminishing a substantial portion of government foreign exchange reserves—representing 80% of total earnings and 60% of GDP. Consequently, decreased revenue hampers funding for developmental projects and essential programs, hindering overall welfare enhancements for the population. This issue also presents hurdles in national investment efforts and heightens the likelihood of accruing substantial debts to international financial bodies. Moreover, oil theft exacerbates corruption in Nigeria, compromising the systems as revenue goes into private pockets instead of state coffers. Heightened corruption shields culprits from being caught and penalized. The resultant significant losses suffered by international oil companies due to oil theft may lead to their withdrawal from Nigeria, causing a loss of business opportunities for the country.

Individuals involved in oil theft disregard crucial measures meant to protect the environment in their operational areas, leading to further degradation of the ecology. This results in environmental contamination, causing health issues and adversely affecting the indigenous community's ecological livelihood. Additionally, addressing the aftermath of oil theft negatively impacts resource allocation for development finance. Furthermore, this disturbs the ecological balance, resulting in the extinction of some plant and animal species, undermining the core principles of sustainable development.

The rise in unemployment rates and household income decline are additional consequences of oil theft, though not immediately evident, as highlighted in scholarly works by Soremi (2019), Peterside (2022), and Eromosele (2023). Other repercussions include the displacement of local populations due to environmental destruction, rendering their surroundings unsafe for habitation and traditional livelihoods. The militarization of areas prone to oil theft poses risks to public safety and may lead to population displacement. Youth involved in oil theft acquire small firearms, endangering community members and overall peace. Financial gains from oil theft facilitate the acquisition of these weapons. Occasionally, oil exchange processes also result in obtaining firearms.

Oil theft in rural areas significantly damages the traditional economy of the local population, prompting the younger generation to abandon conventional livelihoods,

affecting food production. This shift poses a risk of food insecurity, not just locally but nationally, as rural areas are the primary source of food. The potential scarcity of essential food items could lead to price hikes due to limited availability, exacerbating existing hunger and threatening lives.

Furthermore, the misappropriation of government resources, particularly through oil theft, hampers social development by hindering essential services like healthcare, education, youth and women's skill acquisition programs, and recreational facilities in rural regions. The visible wealth from illegal oil activities among the youth discourages educational pursuits, as they view oil theft as highly lucrative and an easy way to amass wealth. This diversion deters their engagement in legitimate endeavors that might not offer immediate financial gains but could contribute positively to their social standing.

Conclusion

The current research findings indicate that oil theft offers no advantages for the government or the general population. The related expenses have become excessively burdensome and are beyond our financial capacity. Hence, it's crucial to curb this behavior, which not only threatens Nigeria's economic advancement but also undermines social harmony, particularly at the grassroots level where youth involved in such activities are situated. Therefore, initiating efforts to combat oil theft at the local level is vital, emphasizing the pivotal role of traditional leaders in this endeavor. Successfully addressing oil theft at the community level could lead to substantial progress in reducing or potentially eradicating this unlawful practice.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis and discussion provided, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Public Awareness:* Educate individuals about the severe consequences of oil theft to dissuade involvement. Community awareness groups supervised by traditional authorities can facilitate this through consistent radio messages and advertisements.
- ii. Addressing Youth Involvement:* Provide employment opportunities and create a conducive environment for entrepreneurial ventures among adolescents to deter their engagement in oil theft. Enhancing the financial appeal of lawful livelihoods is crucial.
- iii. Role of Traditional Leaders:* Traditional leaders should set an example by refraining from any association with oil theft. Their ethical behavior serves as a model for the younger generation, impacting their actions.
- iv. Accountability of Leaders:* Strip titles and positions from traditional leaders involved in oil theft to maintain community governance integrity. Public shaming and social media exposure can support this action.
- v. Values Reorientation:* Educate individuals about the dangers of excessive wealth pursuit and emphasize societal values like honesty, hard work, and integrity, primarily led by traditional leaders.

- vi. Sanctions and Accountability:* Denounce and prosecute individuals engaged in oil theft, confiscating unlawfully acquired assets to deter potential offenders. Public disclosure of offenders' details and exclusion from nation-building roles is crucial.
- vii. Uniform Punishment:* Impose uniform consequences on all guilty individuals to combat corruption and nepotism effectively. Rigorous punitive measures endorsed by governing authorities are essential.
- viii. Incentives for Leaders:* Consider positive incentives like national recognition or honor awards to motivate traditional leaders in their efforts against oil theft.
- ix. Collaborative Security Efforts:* Establish joint security measures between local community policing, formal security networks, and NNPC for effective oil theft prevention.
- x. Government-Community Collaboration:* Collaborate with communities using oil revenue to develop infrastructure transparently, building trust to discourage pipeline sabotage and oil theft at the grassroots level.

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