

## The Politics of Youth Violence in Rumuekpe and its Impact on Rumuekpe Community Development, 2004-2010

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### Abstract

The study centered on politics of youth violence and its impact on Rumuekpe community development, within the period of 2004 - 2010. Rumuekpe is one of the oil producing communities in Niger Delta region of Nigeria and is noted for their peaceful coexisted and friendly relationship with their guests and neighbours. Suddenly, the communities were thrown into violence due to the inability of the community youth leadership to ensure the accountability of their government and operate all inclusive government, and insincerity in activities of the oil companies operating in Rumuekpe to effectively enforce community development programme in Rumuekpe. The unsatisfactory activities of the youth leadership resulted to agitation by some factions of the youths for a change of the youth leadership, coupled with the ill activities of the oil multinationals, the aggrieved youths were left with no option than to embark on intensive agitation for a change of youth leadership, and community development by oil multinationals. Unfortunately, the agitation graduated to youth violence in Rumuekpe. To that effect, the study is aimed at identifying the causes and effects of the violence on Rumuekpe people and community development. Secondary and primary data were used to achieve the objectives of the study. Our findings proved that the violence was caused by agitation for change in youth leadership and poor activities of Shell in Rumuekpe community. The study showed that the violence had negative impact on Rumuekpe people, community development, oil multinationals and Nigerian state. Based on that, the study made some recommendations on the modalities to avoid future youth violence and achieve community development in Rumuekpe in particular, and Niger Delta Region at large.

**Keywords :** Politics, Youth Violence, Community Development, Youth Leadership, and Oil Multinationals.

### 1. Introduction

The realities of the activities of the oil multinationals and aggrieved youths of Rumuekpe communities are laudable in the youth violence that dislocated the development paradigms in Rumuekpe communities. The communities are noted for their peaceful co-existence among themselves and strangers therein. Their peaceful environment attracted many oil companies and the establishment of numerous oil installations in the area. The youths are law abiding and committed to the course of the oil multinationals and Nigerian State, until recently, when the oil multinationals and Nigerian State started interfering in the politics of the youth leadership of the communities as an approach to destabilize the community leadership. Their intention was aimed at giving the oil multinationals and Nigerian State the opportunity to exploit and cat-away the oil resources of the community without any interference.

Niger Delta region accounts for over 90% of Nigerian export earnings, and over 70% of Nigerian total revenue (Ekuerhare, 2002). While Rumuekpe communities in particular have been the main source of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Eastern operations in Rivers State, hosting the biggest manifold in Eastern Division, a booster station vital for communication in the swamps of Niger Delta, and a flow station processing 10,000 to 15,000 barrel of oil per day (Chigbo, 2011:2). Accordingly, Smith (2012:3) adds that Rumuekpe communities serve as a gathering point for oil and gas pipelines and other installations that crisis-cross Niger Delta region, with approximately 100,000 barrels of oil flowing through the Rumuekpe oil facilities per day. This is about 10% of total SPDC production per day.

With the strategic importance of Rumuekpe to both the oil multinationals and Nigerian State, one expects Rumuekpe communities to be an epitome of socio-economic development on account of the expected dividends from the oil proceeds from the communities. On the contrary, Wilson (2012:56) has it that the oil and gas deposit and installations

in Rumuekpe have become a curse, rather than a blessing to Rumuekpe communities. The operations of the oil multinationals generated several challenges to the socio-economic development of Rumuekpe communities. The unnecessary interference of the oil multinationals and other state agencies to the community leadership politics and their deprivation activities prompted the youths to rise for an agitation against the operations of the multinationals. Accordingly, Chigbo (2011:2) argues that Rumuekpe crisis of 2004 was principally stimulated by Shell and other state agencies in the community, due to their inability to establish and implement effectively, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for effective community development for Rumuekpe communities. This warranted the youths to agitate for access to oil contracts and payments to the youths of the communities as an empowerment approach for the youths. Unfortunately, the oil multinationals used the opportunity of the demands by the youths to award contracts to the youths, but such contracts and payments were done discriminately. The multinational as an agent of the state, used their powers to award the oil and gas contracts to only the ruling faction of the youths and pay what ever pleases them to pay to the faction with out due process and consideration of other interest in Rumuekpe. In most cases, even award contracts to less competent contractors and to non indigenes on a quota meant for Rumuekpe youths. The discriminate award of contracts and payments to the youths resulted to polarization of the youths. The marginalized and deprived faction started raising arm against the benefitting faction. No wonder, Jega (2007) states that in post – colonial Nigerian State, the state plays a leading role in the development process and distribution of resources among her citizens, although with its attendant implications of using all means, including violence and war to have access to the state powers by the aggrieved groups in the society. Tenuche (2009) adds that in such situation, the youths become the instrument to actualize this objective of using violence and war to drive home their community demands for equitable distribution of state resources for the community development. This engineered the Rumuekpe youths to employ agitation and confrontation in demand for the development of Rumuekpe communities by the oil multinationals operating in the area. The agitation was on one hand against the leadership of the youths, who are beneficiaries of the state manipulations on oil contracts and payments, and on the other hand against the oil companies and Nigerian state. The agitation graduated to rise of arm groups in Rumuekpe and eventually communal wars, killing hundred of Rumuekpe and non Rumuekpe people, rendering the few that are living homeless and forcing them to be refugees in another communities, and increasing the poverty rate in the Rumuekpe communities. A trend that have caused a lot of challenges and set back to Rumuekpe community development in particular, and Niger Delta region at large. Although the oil companies and Nigerian State have their own share of the violence and killings, but Rumuekpe people and communities remain the principal casualty of the crisis.

## **2. Imperative and Aim of the study**

The value of any research is determined by its impact on the existing body of knowledge in the area of the study, and to further serve as a working guide for scholars and practitioners in future research (Obasi, 2000). This study is on the politics of youth violence in Rumuekpe and its impact on Rumuekpe community development, within the period of 2004-2010. The study will explore variables on issues of youth violence, youth leadership, oil multinational activities and community development, and make contributions to the impact of youth violence and oil multinational activities on community development. To achieve the above , the study is aimed at:

- Analyzing the causes of Rumuekpe youth violence within the period under study.
- Examine the role of oil multinational companies and Nigerian state on Rumuekpe crisis.
- Examine the effect of the Rumuekpe youth violence on Rumuekpe community development and Nigerian State.

## **3. Data Collection**

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through interviews and focused group discussions with some Rumuekpe indigenes and residents, who were either parties or observers to the violence. Data were also collected through interview with some oil multinationals personnel in Rumuekpe, who were knowledgeable on Rumuekpe violence. During our interview and discussion, we promised our respondents not to disclose their names, due to its risky nature, hence the respondents complied accordingly and the interview was conducted on strict secrecy. The secondary data were collected from books, reports, websites, newspapers, position papers, journals, unpublished articles etc on activities of Rumuekpe youths, oil multinationals operating in Rumuekpe, the Rumuekpe youth violence, and Rumuekpe community development. Content analysis was used to analyse the secondary data. With the primary and secondary data, the study achieved its objectives.

#### **4. Area of the study**

The study was basically on Rumuekpe communities of Ikwerre ethnic nationality in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Rumuekpe is a clan with eight communities, namely Ekwuche, Imogu, Omogwa, Oduoha, Ovelle, Mgbuchie, Mgbuodo, and Omoviri.

Geographically, Rumuekpe is one of the Niger Delta communities that falls within Nigeria rain forest zone, with a projected population of over 18,000. The area shares boundary with Rundele communities at the East, with Ahoada communities in the West and South, and Elele-Alimini at the North. Socio-politically, Rumuekpe is a segmentary society, where the families of various villages form units of political and social organizations for administrative convenience. Iroanwusi (1991:11) holds that the oldest man in the family and village heads the family and the village respectively. The oldest man settles dispute among the family and village members, and ensures that the policies of the community are enforced. Economically, Rumuekpe is blessed with the combination of swamp, forest, and farmlands leading to the high economic activities of farming, fishing, herbalism, and trading. Wilson (2002:41) states that due to the geographical terrain of the area, economic activities are difficult to carry out on account of poor transportation and communication facility during raining season, as flooding, earth roads, poor road net-work, absence of electricity in majority of the communities poses challenges to the production and distribution of the goods from the area.

Rumuekpe is one of the oil nerves of Nigeria, as the area is blessed with high crude oil deposit, which qualifies the area as one of the major oil producing communities in Rivers State. Chigbo (2011:3) has it that Rumuekpe communities are the main artery of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Eastern operations, hosting the biggest manifold in the Eastern Division. SPDC started operations in Rumuekpe since 1956, and Rumuekpe serves as a gathering point for the oil and gas pipelines and other installations that criss-cross to other parts of the Niger Delta. Similarly, Smith (2011:4) adds that approximately 100,000 barrels of oil flows through Rumuekpe pipelines per day, which is about 10% of SPDC total production per day. On account of the oil and gas deposit in the area, Rumuekpe houses numerous oil and gas multinationals including SPDC, Agip, Elf, and Niger Delta Petroleum Resources. The activities of these oil companies have in several ways hampered the political and socio-economic development of Rumuekpe people and communities.

#### **5. Conceptual clarification**

##### *5.1 Politics*

Politics as a concept has been conceptualized by different scholars from different perspectives and their divergent views portrays different messages on the concept. Bluhm (1978) sees politics as a "social process, culminating in the making decision for a group". Similarly, Easton (1965) defines politics as an "authoritative allocation of values for a society" within the political system. A policy is authoritative when the person to whom it is intended to apply, or who are affected by it considers that they must or ought to obey it, otherwise remains unauthoritative. While, Lasswell states that politics is the study of "who gets what, when and how" in a given political society. Then, for this study, politics implies the allocation of values - political power and oil resources among the youths of Rumuekpe communities. Politics shows the relationship involving Rumuekpe people and the oil multinationals on the issues of who possesses the powers to control the oil resources of the communities, and how many youths are direct beneficiaries of the resources at what point. Of course, power being a scarce value, but desired all, must be struggle for before acquiring it. The quest for power and the struggle for it in Rumuekpe communities resulted to constant conflictual relationship in the communities. And the persistent struggle between various youths for the power to control and appropriate oil resources resulted to violence in Rumuekpe. Politics will be used as a vital variable in this study to prove the interest of individuals and groups to struggle for power and use same for the allocation of Rumuekpe resources to individuals and groups for the development of Rumuekpe communities or otherwise.

##### *5.2 Youth Violence*

The National Youth Development Policy (2001) defines youth as people who are within the age bracket of 18-35. The youth constitute over 40% of Nigerian total population. In Rumuekpe, the youth is that segment of the population that are of middle age, full of energy and ideas on the modalities for effective Rumuekpe community development or otherwise, and occupies higher numerical strength in the community. Ozohu-Suleiman (2000) regards the youths as the most active segment of any community population, that determines the peace and stability of the community. The same youth

determines the degree of disorderliness and instability of any community, particularly when they are aggrieved, as in the case of Rumuekpe community. Elegbeleye (2005) sees youth restiveness/violence as sustained protestation embarked upon by to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths. This is characterized by violence and disruption of lawful activities and destructions of life and property. Youth violence In Rumuekpe became inevitable due to the prevailing condition in the community. In an attempt for the Rumuekpe youths to determine their fate, amidst the prevailing exploitation and deprivation of the youths, the youths resorted to violence as a means of expressing their demand for equitable distribution of the oil resources among the youths. For the purpose of this study, youth violence, crisis, and restiveness would be used interchangeably.

### 5.3 Community Development

In this research, community development would be used interchangeably with rural development. In his view, Nnoli (1981:36) sees development as the interaction of individuals and society with their physical, biological and inter-human environments, transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. Mabongunje (1980:30) holds that rural development is the improvement of the living standards of the low-income people living in the rural area of a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their production activities. It is a broad base reorganization and mobilisation of the rural masses and resources, so as to enhance the capacity of the rural populace to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this. The views of Mabongunje and Nnoli appear relevant to this study. The study observed that the improvement on the well-being of Rumuekpe people and transformation of the community is vital for effective living of the people in the community, as the indices of development are dwindling and issues of underdevelopment increasing.

## 6. Discussion of the findings

### 6.1 Analysis of the causes of Rumuekpe Youth Violence

Our study noted that the issues leading to Rumuekpe youth crisis are peculiar to Rumuekpe communities, and by extension applicable to other Niger Delta communities. Such issues include:

#### 6.1.1 Bad Governance

Governance at this point implies the leadership style and activities of the Rumuekpe youth leadership at various families and communities of Rumuekpe. World Bank (1992) clearly identified the main characteristics of bad governance in the society as thus:

- Failure to properly distinguish between what is public and what is private, leading to appropriation of otherwise public resources.
- Inability to establish a predictable framework for law and governance behavior in a manner conducive to development or arbitrariness in the application of laws and rules.
- Excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirement and so forth, which impedes the functions of markets and encourages rent-seeking.
- Priorities that are inconsistent with development thereby resulting in misallocation of national resources; and
- Exceedingly narrow base or non-transparent decision making.

The study adopts the above as the indices of bad governance in any society, and these indices are prevalent in Rumuekpe youth and community leadership. Mr Friday Edu a.k.a PELE, who was Rumuekpe youth president portrayed evidence of bad governance in Rumuekpe. He appropriated public goods (oil resources) to himself and his supporters. He monopolized the oil contracts from SPDC and other companies in the area. He used his position as the youth president to assume office as the Community Liaison Officer(CLO) to SPDC and other oil multinationals, and used his offices to determine who gets what resources, including oil and gas contract and payment from the oil multinationals operation in the communities. Worse still is the unaccountability of his leadership in the community. These misdeeds of Mr. Friday Edu angered the youths and warranted for agitation for change of leadership. This resulted to the emergence of strong oppositions from the youths, and graduated to regrouping of the youths into factions to struggle power from Mr. Edu and eventually communal crisis in Rumuekpe.

#### 6.1.2 Power tussle among the youths for Rumuekpe youth and community leadership.

The power tussle became necessary and important factor in Rumuekpe crisis as the ruling youth president, Mr. Edu , who as at the time of the crisis had already served for over 15 years as the youth president, and had no intention or machinery on motion for a change in leadership, rather used his offices as youth president and CLO to intimidate and oppress others in the community, and empower himself economically. He was adding new cars to his fleet and developing housing estates in Port Harcourt on regular basis. Other youths viewed the offices of youth president and CLO as lucrative ventures worth struggling for in the community. Such youths demanded for rotation of the youth presidency and CLO among the youths of the various communities. This demand polarized the youths into factions in the community. Mr. S.K. Agala and Mr. Otamini used the opportunity to mobilise some youths with the aim to overthrow the leadership of Mr. Edu and take over same. The mobilisation gained the support of many youths from different Rumuekpe communities and started with the demand for the removal of all the community chiefs who were in support of Mr. Edu government and moves for the installation of new chiefs. Notably, while Agala faction was working for the removal of Mr. Edu and to take over the leadership, Mr Edu faction was also putting all machinery in place to stop Agala from removing him from office. This tussle continued and finally became communal war that consumed many lives and properties in Rumuekpe. Ogbara (2010) states that the tussle resulted to the first ever offensive and inhuman attack in Rumuekpe ( Omoviri community in particular) leading to the death of two youths, namely Chioma Egbe, and Emperor, who were believed to be members of Edu group. And from then, it has been one attack or the other in the communities.

#### 6.1.3 Reprisal attacks by aggrieved factions.

The crisis would have been managed and brought under control, but not for the reprisal attacks of the various youth factions. Upon the early attack that led to the death of some Edu loyalists, Mr. Edu launched a counter attack that was very destructive, leading to the death of many people including Mr. Victor Wokoma, whose body was butchered and thrown into a deep pit by Edu faction. Ogbara (2010) confirms that the Agala faction angered by the incessant killings by Edu group, demanded for explanation from Mr. Edu for his actions, and that the body of Mr. Victor Wokoma should be produced alive by Edu group or face more attacks. The inability of Edu group to explain and produce the late Wokoma led to another reprisal attack by Agala faction, leaving hundreds of Rumuekpe people dead. The reprisal attacks continue as much as each group can afford. Our findings prove that the continuous reprisal attack escalated the violence beyond negotiation level for peace, and engulfed the entire eight communities in Rumuekpe .

#### 6.1.4 Presence of Arms and Gang Groups in neighbouring communities.

Wilson (2012:63) argues that the activities of the militants in the Niger Delta have resulted to proliferation and possession of arms by many youths and rise of many cult groups in various communities of Niger Delta, which Rumuekpe is not an exception. With the heavy and small arms in their possession, they engaged in arms for hire business as means of livelihood, and in most cases supply personal services to fight opponent when hired. Significantly, our study noted that amidst this scenario in the Niger Delta, Rumuekpe youths are also involved in the business and maintains high level contact and relationship with other militants from neighbouring communities. The two arch rival factions of Mr Edu and Mr. Agala hired the arms and services of such notorious militants as Mr. Soboma George and Mr. Fara respectively for attacks and reprisal attacks in Rumuekpe. The study observed that the engagement of the armed groups from neighbouring communities to aid Rumuekpe youths in their agitations escalated the Rumuekpe crisis, and went further to raise many more armed gangs, who were never tired of attacks and reprisal attacks in Rumuekpe.

#### 6.1.5 High indices of poverty in Rumuekpe Communities.

Anasi (2010) opines that poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor. Similarly, Wilson (2011:67) holds that in a wider perspective, poverty is a general condition of deprivation of needs, social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness, and economic inequality in the society. The oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities of the oil multinationals since 1956 in Rumuekpe have damaged the agricultural lands and other resources of the people. Human Right Watch (2004) states that the activities of the oil multinationals have destroyed the means of livelihood of the Niger Delta people, including Rumuekpe and rendering the people poor amidst the numerous resources in their land. Our study noted that despite the numerous oil and gas resources in

Rumuekpe communities, the people still lack the basic needs of life. Rumuekpe people still drink from oil polluted rivers due to absence of alternative water source, many communities have no good road particularly during raining season, no functional electricity, poor health facility, numerous unemployed youths, insecurity in the communities, visible dilapidated school buildings and destroyed ecosystem. All these angered the youths and prompted them to resort to violence against their youth and community leaders on one hand and the oil and gas multinationals on the other hand, demanding for poverty alleviation of the people and socio-economic development of the area. This brings to focus the views of Aworawo (2000) and Zakaria (2006) that there is a relationship between poverty, loss of livelihood, and inequality and youth restiveness in the society.

#### 6.1.6 SPDC involvement in the politics of Rumuekpe youth leadership.

SPDC is the leading oil and gas multinational operating in Rumuekpe. It had several Memorandum of Understanding on Rumuekpe community development, but appears not willing to implement them, rather interested on who occupies the youth leadership position of the community. Sylvester (2008) holds that SPDC abandoned her development responsibilities to Rumuekpe community, instead preferred to instigate youth leadership crisis in the community. The study observed that SPDC support for Mr. Edu emergence as the Rumuekpe youth president and subsequent adoption as the CLO was a clear evidence of SPDC unwarranted involvement in the youth politics. Worse still, is the fact that SPDC was only interested in the protection of her oil and gas installations in Rumuekpe and not Rumuekpe people and community. The youths viewed the SPDC activities as calculated deprivation, oppression and the desire to continuously exploit the community. Our finding proved that the SPDC involvement in youth politics, and insincerity to develop the communities triggered anger among the youths, and the youth protested violently against the perceived SPDC deprivation and exploitation in Rumuekpe. This protest took different dimensions and eventually settled as communal crisis in Rumuekpe.

#### 6.1.7 Discriminate award of oil and gas contracts and payments.

Smith (2011) stated that on the pretence to implement effective community relations and encouraging indigenous contractors, SPDC awarded huge maintenance contracts concerning its oil wells, the trans-Niger Delta pipelines, its booster station and flow station to the Mr. Edu faction of the youth. Unfortunately, soon after, Mr. Agala faction toppled the Edu faction, and instantly, SPDC switched over to Agala faction, paying Agala all the entitlements for the contract, without due process for award of contract. SPDC was only interested on the youth leadership in power at any point and to use them to destabilize the communities. The situation triggered another round of violence in Rumuekpe that led to the emergence of many arm gangs as youth groups to fight for various oil contracts in Rumuekpe. SPDC was also patronising the various arm gangs with different contracts and payments, thereby putting so much funds in the hands the various arm gangs in Rumuekpe. The study noted that the SPDC encouraged the Hobbesian state of nature in Rumuekpe, where killings and violence were no longer a crime, but a source of supremacy for economic and political survival and access to SPDC contracts and payments.

#### 6.1.8 Struggle for land ownership in Rumuekpe

The discriminate implementation of SPDC community development projects in Rumuekpe resulted to social inequality in the communities. SPDC provided drinking water and electricity in three communities, out of the eight communities, ignoring the remaining five communities. All attempts by the five communities to access SPDC for the provision of social facilities for them as obtainable in other three communities proved abortive. SPDC refusal for provision of the facilities to the five communities was on account of SPDC claim that the portion of land of the five communities are not involve in the hosting of the flow station and oil well in Rumuekpe, therefore the five communities deserve no host community project. But the five communities argued that there are other major oil and gas installations in their lands that power the flow station, and that the oil and gas waste and inconveniences arising from the flow station also affect the five communities. A case in point was the recent oil spillage in Rumuekpe that pullulated Rumuekpe river, which is the only source of drinking water in the eight communities, and farm lands of all the communities. All the communities were victims of the spillage. Since all negotiations for SPDC to give development attention to the other five communities failed, the five communities resorted to lay claims to the joint ownership of the flow station land, tracing their ancestral lands and lineage in Rumuekpe. Beside, all lands in Rumuekpe are communally owned. The agitation by the five communities for joint



ownership of the flow station resulted to conflict, tension, mistrust and arch rival among the eight communities in Rumuekpe. Our study observed that the dispute over the ownership of the flow station and demand for equitable distribution of SPDC community project resulted to violence and killing in Rumuekpe.

## 6.2 *The effects of Rumuekpe youth violence on the people and communities of Rumuekpe.*

### 6.2.1 Loss of effective community leadership

We observed that during and immediately after the crisis, Rumuekpe communities were operating without specific leadership. Some of the chiefs died and have not been replaced, while those alive were in exile without chieftaincy mandate, and even the few that came back to Rumuekpe alive denounced their chieftaincy stool on account of the fear that they may be victims of any attack. At the youth level, since all the key leaders were killed and their surviving followers in exile, the few followers that had the courage to come back to Rumuekpe after the crisis became afraid of forming new youth leadership on account of the fear that they may be attacked. The implication of all these is that Rumuekpe communities were operating without direction from any leader. This affected policy making and implementation process in the communities.

### 6.2.2 Loss of traditional value of Rumuekpe people.

The violence led to loss of culture and traditional value of Rumuekpe people. The violence accounts for the killing of Rumuekpe people by Rumuekpe people, raping of Rumuekpe women in exile by strangers, not honouring their ancestors on their market days, some of the women in exile were married without pride price paid in line with Rumuekpe marriage custom, etc. All these are forbidding in Rumuekpe by their tradition. The youths lost sense of culture and tradition in the area, as they there were carried away by the culture of violence and attacks. Indeed, the violence turned Rumuekpe to a community without cultural value and rule of law of the land.

### 6.2.3 Loss of lives and properties of the Rumuekpe people

The violence led to the death of many people and destruction of numerous properties in Rumuekpe. Both indigene and non indigene were killed. Although, as at the time of this study, there was inconclusive data on the total death during the violence. This was on account of the fact that many died as refugees in other communities without record of such death, many were burned by fire and such figure not established, many were thrown into water-wells and rivers, many died in the bush while running away and many were carried alive and later killed by opponent in an unknown place. The figure of all such deaths are yet to be established, as the data keep on increasing from time to time based on family records. However, Ogbara (2010) holds that at the early stage of the violence in 2005, one of the reprisal attacks led by Agala group against Edu group killed over 60 persons. Our interview with Mr. Amadi Obiri in the community shows that average of 100 persons died every month during the pick of the violence, among whom are the youths themselves. Notably among the youths are the deaths of Mr. Victor Wokoma, who was killed and the body butchered and thrown into a pit, Mr. Egbe, who was killed in his work place at Holy Rosary School, Port Harcourt, Barr. Gilbert Obio, who was killed on his way to court in Port Harcourt, Mr. Edu, the arrow head of the crisis was killed and his head cut off and brought to Elele-Alimini for celebration by Agala group, to mention but a few. Regrettably, while the people were killed in their large numbers, their houses, properties, schools, markets, churches farmlands etc were destroyed. Today, the surviving Rumuekpe people are yet to come back to their ancestral home in large numbers due to absence of accommodation. Many compounds were still deserted either because the owners are dead or are alive but can not rebuild them.

### 6.2.4 Increase in Poverty and loss of social amenities in Rumuekpe Communities

The youth embarked on several agitations and violence against individuals and groups in Rumuekpe as an attempt to demand for poverty alleviation of the people and socio-economic development of the Rumuekpe communities, but unknown to the youths, the same agitation and violence resulted to increase in poverty in the community, rather than alleviating their poverty. As the violence continued, the oil multinationals operating in the communities were losing production, which resulted to the laying –off of some of their staff, including Rumuekpe people. Their markets were destroyed; river polluted with dynamite and other chemicals, and farm lands became training ground for the gang groups,

thereby affecting marketing and farming activities. The violence and insecurity led to the loss of jobs and means of livelihood of many Rumuekpe people. The effect is increase in unemployment and deprivation of means of livelihood.

Surprisingly, while the youths are fighting for the supremacy and control of the Rumuekpe youth leadership, they were also destroying the social amenities in opponent communities. Our study noted that today, on account of the crisis, no community in Rumuekpe has a functional electricity supply, telecommunication facility ( GSM Services) , bore – hole water supply, etc, as they were all destroyed by the youths.

#### 6.2.5 Insecurity and distortion of Government development projects due for Rumuekpe

The violence made Rumuekpe a security risk community, and the fear of insecurity has deterred the government at all levels from investing in Rumuekpe for a meaningful community development. Our study observed that while Rotimi Ameachi government was building model primary schools and health centres in every political ward in Rivers State, non was build in Rumuekpe on account of violence and insecurity. Even the primary school that was later allocated to Rumuekpe is yet to commence accordingly. This brings to the argument that no community development can take place on atmosphere of prime violence and insecurity in the community.

#### 6.2.6 Proliferation of Arms and Armed gang groups in Rumuekpe

On account of violence, many youth factions emerged – Edu group, Agala group etc. in Rumuekpe, and each group provided arms for their members to enable them fight their opponents. Various groups even sort for support from neighbouring communities for supply of arms. During the period, external militants such as Fara, and Soboma George established contact with Rumuekpe youths to train and initiate them into various armed gangs. Although, there is a peace process now in the communities, but the surviving youths have neither surrendered nor destroyed the arms raised during the violence in Rumuekpe, and the same youths had not denounce or resigned their membership from such gangs. The implication is that there is heavy presence of arms and gangs in Rumuekpe. Kalu (2012) holds that on account of heavy arms in the possession of the Rumuekpe youths, the youths blocked East-West road on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 for another round of protest, even when the peace talk has reached advance stage. Although, the youths have accepted amnesty, but still function in different occasions as armed gangs for hire to attack opponents both within Rumuekpe and outside Rumuekpe community.

#### 6.2.7 Human of Right Abuses

The study observed that during the crisis, both state and non state security agencies operated in Rumuekpe. The various security agencies rather than securing the lives and properties of the people, were accusing Rumuekpe people without established fact, humiliating and raping women, engaging the children on forced labour, and killing and torturing Rumuekpe people. Within the crisis period, Rumuekpe became a safe haven for kidnappers, who were operating along the East –West road and neighbouring communities in the state. The study noted the above issues as indices of human right abuses in Rumuekpe.

#### 6.2.8 Wastage of financial resources

Rumuekpe youth violence gained prominence during the peak of Niger Delta militancy and attracted both local and international attentions. Government at all levels spent a lot of financial resources for peace and security in the area. US Department of State (2011) states that the peace keeping and security in Niger Delta, including Rumuekpe communities attracted greater percent of the government allocations, due to the violence in the area, leaving the needed physical and social infrastructural development with less allocation. Both the government and oil multinationals operating in Rumuekpe shifted attention from community development programme to peace and security programmes during the violence. This led to deployment of Join Task Forces and other State security agencies to Rumuekpe. Indeed our data proved that the financial resources used for the security of lives and properties during the crisis would have been used for Rumuekpe communities' development, if the communities were at peace.



### 6.2.9 Fall in oil an

As a way of expressing their anger on the oil multinationals, the youths engaged on pipeline vandalism, bombing of oil installations, oil bunkering, and kidnapping of oil company staff. On account of these, SPDC short down production activities temporary at Rumuekpe. The effect is that the violence led to fall in oil and gas production in Rumuekpe within the period, and this affected both SPDC and Nigerian State revenue. However, Wilson (2012:61) argued that fall in oil and gas production, and revenue from Rumuekpe during the violence were some of the prices SPDC and Nigerian State paid for the violence.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on our findings, the study made the following recommendations.

- i. Nigerian State and oil companies operating in Rumuekpe should show clear political will to develop the Rumuekpe people and communities, rather than showing attention to only the development oil facilities.
- ii. SPDC and other oil companies operating in Rumuekpe should stay away from the politics of Rumuekpe community and youth leadership
- iii. Government should develop adequate security mechanism to regulate inflow of arms and formation of gang groups in Rumuekpe and other host communities.
- iv. Government and SPDC should pay adequate compensation to Rumuekpe people and communities for their involvement in the violence that led to the death and destruction of properties of Rumuekpe people.
- v. Government and SPDC should apply adequate poverty alleviation programmes and skill development scheme for Rumuekpe youths as an empowerment project. This will go along way to reduce unemployment and poverty in Rumuekpe.
- vi. SPDC should employ the services of Rumuekpe indigenous contractors and be indiscriminate in their contract award and payment to them. This will give sense of belonging to the indigenous contractors.
- vii. Rumuekpe youths should define clearly their terms of governance in the youth leadership. This will include tenure of office, functions, and their limits to avoid abuse of office. And the new youth and community leadership in Rumuekpe should be accountable to the people.
- viii. Government should institute a peace process that will reconcile all the youth factions in Rumuekpe and ensure that the youths surrender their arms willingly.

## 8. Conclusion

The youth violence in Rumuekpe within the period was principally on account of the youths demand for participation in their governance process and development of their community. Inability to achieve the above resulted to violence that destroyed lives and properties, and dislocated community development activities in Rumuekpe. Indeed, both Rumuekpe people, communities, oil multinationals, and Nigerian State were negatively affected by the violence. The memories and effects of the violence can not be forgetting in a hurry in Rumuekpe. It is therefore our submission that when the study recommendations are applied, such violence in Rumuekpe in particular and Niger Delta at large would be avoided, and effective community development achieved.

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