

## **OIL PIPELINES VANDALISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the critical issue of oil pipelines vandalism and its effects on the socio-economic development in Nigerian society. Crude oil was discovered in the Niger Delta region in 1956. The production of crude oil began in 1958. Shell D'Arcy was the first oil company that commenced oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria. Thereafter, other international oil companies, IOCs, such as Exxon-Mobil, Agip, Total and Chevron began oil exploration and exploitation in the country. However, as from the 1990s there was the evolution of militancy and the consequent widespread incidences of oil pipelines vandalism and oil theft in the Niger Delta region. The reasons for the incessant oil pipelines vandalism in Nigeria include the pervasive poverty and frustration in the Niger Delta, and Nigeria at large, and corruption and sabotage within the oil sector. There was also frightening unemployment among the educated youths which compel some of them to take to anti-social behaviours such as oil pipeline vandalism, oil theft and kidnapping for ransom etc. Moreover, there was the international dimension of pipeline vandalism whereby some unscrupulous Nigerians collude with foreigners to steal crude oil in the country for pecuniary gains. Besides, the establishment of illegal refineries in some parts of the Niger Delta encourages pipeline vandalism, and the oil politics and struggle for resource control. Also, there were issues of ineffective security arrangement around pipelines and vital oil facilities largely as a result of inaccessibility of many areas in the Niger Delta region and the menace of pipeline vandals and oil thieves. The paper also highlighted the effects of pipeline vandalism on the socio-economic development in Nigerian society. These include colossal loss of revenue from oil by the government; the destruction of critical national assets necessary for economic development; and loss of lives of many citizens. It also worsens the problem of environmental degradation and thereby impoverishes the people. Pipeline vandalism also generated social insecurity and compelled some international oil companies to divest their investments from the country. This stagnates the country's economic growth. The paper finally suggested that the federal government should initiate dialogue with the stakeholders in the Niger Delta region so as to find lasting solution to the problems of pipeline vandalism, oil theft and militancy in the region.