

Comparative study of Economic Base of Ikwerre and Andoni Women for Community development activities before Oil Exploration in the Niger Delta Region.

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Abstract: *The authors explored economic base of women in two ethnic nationalities (Ikwerre and Andoni) of the Niger Delta Region, and compared their development activities before oil exploration in the region. The authors critically, yet objectively comparatively examined their different occupations as a source for development activities. The effect of oil exploration on their economic base and ability to embark on development activities were also highlighted. The study employed a comparative survey design. The population of study comprised of members of community based women organizations in the two ethnic groups numbering 399. Sample size of 200, which is 50% of the total population was used. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled Economic Activities of women questionnaire (EAOWQ), with a reliability index of 0.79. Mean statistics were used to analyze the research questions, while Z statistics were used to test the study hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, it was found that oil exploration had impacted on the economic base of the women in the areas of study. The paper concludes that more could be achieved on the development of the region, if the recommendations are implemented.*

Keywords: *Economicbase, Ikwerre, Andoni, Community Development, Oil Exploration.*

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I. Introduction

The development of a community or nation, requires a collective effort of all the sectors in the community or nation. It is believed that there could be no meaningful development without the involvement or support of all stake holders. It is against this background that this paper examines the economic base of women of Andoni and Ikwerre ethnic nationalities, for development activities in the Niger Delta region before oil exploration.

The women of Andoni and Ikwerre ethnic nationalities has made tremendous contributions to the development of their communities before the era of oil exploration. In the area of physical development they had built market stalls, town halls, maternity, homes and schools. The women had also promoted cultural institutions in these two ethnic nationalities.

The Niger Delta Region is located in the southern part of Nigeria. This area according to Irikana (2006) comprises of Islands coastal plains and peninsiders of the Niger estuary.

The Andoni (obolo) people occupies the eastern corner from the Bonny River to the Cross River estuaries. Andoni (obolo) territory is a vast area made up of many towns and fish settlements. Most of the villagers are only accessible by boat and canoes. The area is blessed with abundant rain and mangrove, forest, salt water, which provide seafood's, including fish, crayfish, periwinkles, cockles etc.

The abundant white and red mangrove in the area provide refuge and breeding ground for large population of aquatic animals, fish and shellfish, making the occupation of the people in the area predominantly fishing, and later trading. Until the 19th century, the women engaged in a multiple type of economy, which includes trapping of fish, prawns and shrimps, gathering of shellfish like periwinkles (*mpanotus focus radula*), cockle (*anada senilis*), oyster (*graypaes gasa*) and whelt (*trais conveneta*).

According to Achinewhu (1994), the history of Ikwerre people predated the advent of the white men in Nigreja. The Ikwerre ethnic nationality are made up of four groups namely, the Elele group (Ishimbam), Esilia group (Ishiali), Reo group (Risimini) and the OPA group (Obior/Port Harcourt/Akpor). The Ikwerre people are bounded in the north and west by Ogba-Egbema, Ekpeye and Abua in the south by the Ijaws, in the east by the people of Tai-Elemente.

Ikwerre people are predominating farmers. The area have large expands of land with green vegetation which makes them produce such farm crops as cassava, yam, cocoyam, plantain etc. though they had streams

which are tributaries of few rivers and oceans, from where they catch fish for domestic use, they were not major fishers. They also engaged in petty trading and with the proceeds from these, they embark on community development activities.

Apart from fishing and farming, the women in these areas also generated income from ratchet making, fetching of firewood, thatch making using nypa palm fronds, charcoal making (Irikama 2006).

Harikand (2000) appreciated the economic enterprise of women in these areas and commented that women in the areas are highly regarded as sustainers of life, developers, and providers of stable economic for internal and external consumption.

This situation short lived following the operations of oil exploration are exploitation in the Niger Delta Region. This view is the position of Ejituwu, (2010) that the ecosystem are currently the victims of oil pollution and exploration in the Niger Delta Region.

Before the operations of the oil companies which are scattered all over the Niger Delta Region, the farmers used to record bountiful harvest because of the abundant minerals on the soil. This tend to have disappeared as the green vegetations that used to characterize the Region had suddenly turned yellow. Virtually all the crops in the Niger Delta Region seen to be witnessing stunted growth. Without the use of fertilizer, the region is no more productive as it used to be in the years before oil exploration. The effect of the activities of oil exploration does not only affect the farmers and the fisher folks. The hunters are not spared as they complain that the blast associated with seismic operations have also driven the animals out of the region. They maintain that before now, animals are in every bush and forest, but they hardly find them now even when they walk miles into the forest.

The effects of soil exploration seen to be more devastating on aquatic lives. Whenever there is oil spillage on sea, the fishes which live within the surface of the water are affected and they die. Mud fishes may survive the pollution. Before oil exploration Andoni area is characterized by abundant fish and fishing in the area doesn't require the use of elaborate gadgets to make reasonable catch. All the fisher needs do is to paddle to cool corner and stir the water with the paddle and fish would be attractive around the canoe, but today people paddle all the night with catching any fish.

The oil spillage on water and the activities of oil exploration had made certain species of fish to almost go into extinction. These negative or adverse effect of oil exploration and exploitation have impacted on the traditional occupation of women in these parts of the Niger Delta Region. The resultant effect is poverty, hunger arising from the limited and unproductive economic ventures of their occupation at the present time.

Statement of the problem over the ages, people had always used self help projects to better lives of the member of their immediate communities. Self help projects are born out of the desire of members of a community wishing to make their development activities felt by others. The paper considers the economic activities of women of Ikwerre and Andoni ethnic nationalities before the advents of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta Region. The women in these areas, through farming fishing and trading, had carried out development activities ranging from, building of markets, town halls and schools in their areas. The women had used the proceeds their occupation for development activities before the advent of oil exploration, their economic base seen to be affected by the activities of oil companies in the area. The women no longer record good yield from their crops and those who fish also finds it difficult to make better catch as before. To find solution to the effect of oil exploration on the economic base of the women of Ikwerre and Andoni and its resultant implication on their development activities is the problem of this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to highlight the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women before the advent of oil exploration in the areas and its effect on their development activities.

The specific objectives considered are to :

1. Examine the economic base of the women of in Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration.
2. Identify the development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration
3. Ascertain the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of the women of Ikwerre and Andoni ethnic nationalities.

Research Questions

1. What are the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration in the region?
2. What are the development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women in Niger Delta Region?
3. What are the effect of oil exploration on the economic base of women of Ikwerre and Andoni ethnic nationalities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant difference in the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women.

H02: There is no significant difference between the development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women in the Niger Delta Region.

H03: There is no significant difference between the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women in the Niger Delta Region.

II. Methodology

The design for the study was the comparative survey. This made it possible for data to be collected from the respondents in their respective areas and explained as they occurred. The population of the study comprised of members of fifteen registered women organization in the two areas (Ikwerre and Andoni) with a total membership of three hundred and ninety nine (399).

The sample of the study was two hundred (200) which represents about 50% of the population. Drawn through a proportionate sampling techniques. The instrument was a validated 20 item questionnaire titled: Economic Activities of Women Questionnaire (EAOWO), with a reliability coefficient of 0.79. The instrument was structure by the researchers in a modified 4 points likert scale format. Mean, and ground mean were used to answer the research questions while Z statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

III. Results

The results of the study were derived from the responses to the research question and test of hypotheses thus:

Research question one:

What are the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration.

Table 1: Economic base of Ikwerre women before oil exploration

S/N	Statement	Ikwerre				Andoni			
		\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark	\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark
	Do you agree the following are economic base of your women before oil exploration?								
1	Fish trapping	1.16	0.72	100	Disagree	3.36	0.77	100	Agree
2	Sea food gathering	1.35	0.57	100	Disagree	3.35	0.17	100	Agree
3	Thatch making	1.20	0.46	100	Disagree	2.86	0.75	100	Agree
4	Charcoal production	1.68	0.95	100	Agree	2.61	1.09	100	Agree
5	Yam production	3.70	0.56	100	Agree	1.10	0.46	100	Disagree
6	Cocoyam yam	3.55	0.56	100	Agree	1.20	0.46	100	Disagree
7	Cassava production	3.65	0.52	100	Agree	1.11	0.47	100	Disagree
8	Plantain plantation	2.60	1.08	100	Agree	1.65	0.94	100	Disagree
9	Fish mongering	1.10	0.46	100	Disagree	3.60	0.51	100	Agree
10	Petty trading	2.55	1.04	100	Agree	2.77	0.72	100	Agree
	Aggregate Mean/SD	2.25	0.71			2.30	0.63		

Table 1 presents the economic base of the women of Ikwerre and Andoni before oil exploration in the Niger Delta Region. The table contains 10 items. Mean responses for Ikwerre women shows that 5 items out of the 10 were agree which reveals that yam production, cocoyam, cassava, plantain and petty trade were among the economic base of the women of Ikwerre ethnic nationality. On the side of Andoni women, mean responses show that 6 out of 10 items were agreed to. This indicates that fish trapping, sea food gathering, thatch making, charcoal production, fish mongering and petty trading were among the economic activities of Andoni women.

Research Question Two:

What are the development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women?

Table 2: Mean rating of development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women

S/N	Statement	Ikwerre				Andoni			
		\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark	\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark
	Do you agree the following are developmental activities of women of Ikwerre/ Andoni								
1	Promotion of cultural values.	3.70	0.56	100	Agree	3.60	9.51	100	Agree
2	Renovation of schools and hospitals	3.50	0.75	100	Agree	2.80	0.75	100	Agree
3	Building of market stalls.	3.00	0.71	100	Agree	2.60	1.09	100	Agree
4	Contribution to build town halls	3.60	0.73	100	Agree	2.70	1.92	100	Agree
5	Renovation of maternity homes	3.60	0.73	100	Agree	2.80	0.75	100	Agree
	Aggregate Mean/SD	3.48	0.69			2.9	5.02		

Table 2 shows mean responses of development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women. All the items in the table were agreed to by the respondents as development activities of women in Ikwerre and Andoni. Their aggregate mean are 3.48 for Ikwerre and 2.9 for Andoni. These two mean responses are above the criterion mean of 2.5 hence agreed.

Research Question 3:

what are the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of women in Ikwerre and Andoni.

Table 3: Effect of oil exploration on economic base of women of Ikwerre and Andoni

S/N	Statement	Ikwerre				Andoni			
		\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark	\bar{X}	SD	N	Remark
	Do you agree the following are the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of Ikwerre/Andoni women?								
1	Water pollution	1.20	0.46	100	Disagree	3.70	0.56	100	Agree
2	Migration of fish	1.10	0.46	100	Disagree	3.60	0.51	100	Agree
3	Stunted growth of crops and trees	3.65	0.51	100	Agree	2.60	1.08	100	Agree
4	Extermination of some aquatic animals	2.60	0.75	100	Agree	3.55	0.72	100	Agree
5	Decline in fishing (difficulty in making catch).	1.28	0.44	100	Disagree	3.35	0.72	100	Agree
	Aggregate Mean/SD	1.97	0.72			3.36	3.59		

Table 3 shows the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of women in Ikwerre and Andoni. 2 out of the 5 item were agreed to by the respondents as effects on Ikwerre women, while all the 5 items were agreed to for Andoni. The aggregate mean for Ikwerre is 1.97 while Andoni is 3.36.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

HO1: There is no significant difference between economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration.

Table 4: Z-test of difference between economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women

Variable	N	Significant Level	df	Z-cal	Z-table	Decision
Ikwerre	100	0.05	198	115.9	1.96	Reject Null
Andoni	100					

At 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom, Z-cal is 115.9 while Z-critical is 1.96. Since Z-cal is greater than Z-critical, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected and alternate accepted which means that there is significant difference between the economic activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women.

Hypothesis 2

HO2: There is no significant difference between the development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women before oil exploration.

Table 5: Z-test of difference between development activities of Ikwerre and Andoni women

Variable	N	Significant Level	df	Z-cal	Z-table	Decision
Ikwerre	100	0.05	198	1.145	1.96	Accept Null
Andoni	100					

At 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom, Z-calculated is 1.145 and Z-critical table value is 1.96. Since Z-calculated is less than Z-critical, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore accepted. By implication, it means that the development activities of the women in the areas at the period under review were almost at the same level.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women.

Table 6: Z-test of difference on the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women

Variable	N	Significant Level	df	Z-cal	Z-table	Decision
Ikwerre	100	0.05	198	115.9	1.96	Reject Null
Andoni	100					

At 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom, Z-calculated is 3.79 while Z-critical is 1.96. Since Z-calculated is greater than Z-table the hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected and the alternate accepted which means that there is significant difference in the effects of oil exploration on the economic base of the women of two areas.

IV. Discussion

Findings shows that fish trapping, sea food gathering, thatch making, charcoal production and fish mongering are among the chief economic sources of women in Andoni (Obolo) ethnic nationality. Findings also reveals that yam production, cocoyam, cassava, plantain and petty trading are common among the women of

Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The women of the two ethnic nationalities tend to differ in their economic activities. This could be as a result of their geographical locations. While Andoni people are in the extreme eastern corner from the Bonny River to the Cross River estuaries, dominated by water and mangrove forest, which provides their resources for livelihood. The people of Ikwerre occupies a plan land covered with green vegetations. This geographical spread accounts for the occupation of the women of these ethnic nationalities.

This description in accordance with the observation of Irikana (2006) that the Andoni (obolo) area grows a large mangrove forest vegetation covering about 40 kilometers. This also accounts why the people in the area are predominantly engaged in fishing. In the other hand because the Ikwerre people are compassed about with land with green vegetation they are majorly farmers. Findings also shows that the women of the two ethnic nationalities carried out developmental activities before the era of oil exploration. It was revealed that through the proceeds from their economic activities, the carried out developmental projects, according to their ability. Furthermore, the study reveals that oil exploration impacted negatively on the economic activities of the women in these areas. For the women of Andoni, the exploration of oil destroyed their ecosystem and made it difficult to catch fishes as before. Water pollution destroy fishes and send some species to total extinction. This finding is line with the observation of Mathias (2015) on the effects of oil exploration in the Niger Delta Region. Even in present time, in some parts of the Niger Delta, Ogoni precisely, the effect of pollution caused by oil is noticed even in the taste of fish and other sea foods. On land, the situation is not different. The women of Ikwerre no longer experience the rich harvest of farm crops which characterized the area before oil exploration. Without the use of fertilizer the crops hardly yields reasonably. The green vegetations are turned yellowish, signifying lack of nutrients or minerals, a situation which is also observed by (Irikana, 20154).

However, the result of the test of hypothesis shows a significant difference in the economic base of Ikwerre and Andoni women. Also, the effect of oil exploration on the economic base of the women in the two areas were found to be different. Nevertheless the development activities of the women in the two areas were the same as the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. The result of hypothesis one which is on economic base is in line with the observation of a colonial master as reported by Ejituwu (2010) that Andoni people are probably the wealthiest group in Opobo division comprising Opobo, Ogoni, southern Ibibio, Nkoro and Andoni. The effect of Oil exploration, though records significant different in the study, probably because of the nature of their activities, but the effect remains the same both on land and sea. While the fishes die, the crops also no longer grow as expected.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that oil exploration had, and is still impacting negatively on the economic base of the women of Ikwerre and Andoni of Niger Delta Region, and by extension the whole of the people of the Region. Since the exploration cannot be avoided it should be carried out in a sustainable manner.

VI. Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. All segments of the community should be encouraged to contribute to the development of the community, no matter how little.
2. Oil exploration should be carried out in a sustainable manner.
3. The government and its agencies should always respond quickly to oil spillages, to avoid much damage on the land and sea.
4. The oil companies should make fertilizers available to the people of Niger Delta Region to reduce the effect of oil exploration on the land.

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