Environmental Injustice and the Ogoni and the Bakola-Bagyeli Pygmy Peoples

Experiences from Nigeria and Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

More than two-thirds of the world's biological resources are within the territories of indigenous peoples yet indigenous territories are among the least protected areas of the world. Despite numerous international environmental laws and human rights laws, indigenous peoples and their homelands around the world continue to suffer environmental injustice from undertakers of development projects. This article discusses three issues surrounding indigenous peoples and their homelands in today's contemporary environmentalism: Indigeneity; Self-determination; and Property rights. Two case studies are used to illustrate the plight of indigenous peoples around the world: the struggle for political autonomy and environmental justice by the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria, and the fight for social welfare, economic stability, and environmental justice by the Bakola-BaGyeli Pigmies of Cameroon. In both cases, Oil companies and their activities are presented as a foe to these indigenous peoples and their homelands.

Indigenous peoples have a powerful relationship with the environment that goes beyond the limits of a confined area where perspectives of race, language, nature, and development converge. It is a relationship that encompasses the historical or colonial perception of indigenous peoples as having the "garden of Eden" relationship with nature. That is, indigenous people are seen as peoples living in primitive lands unaltered by significant human intervention. The image created by such a perception is that of wilderness and wild people. This stereotypic notion about

indigenous people is seen as the epicenter in debates over conservation and development policies. Although some advocacy organizations like survival International have embarked on public education campaigns highly critical of words like “primitive” and “savage”, these stereotypes are still present in much public discussion.

Even though it is argued in many instances that this colonial impression of indigenous peoples belittles them and misrepresents the true relationship between people and nature, the notion is used in many situations throughout the world, especially in Europe and North America as an effective tool against excessive modernization (Alcida 1998). It is no doubt, therefore, that indigenous peoples are using this assumption to rally support for their claims to resources, emphasizing their role as stewards of the environment. Richardson (2001) notes that stereotypes of indigenous peoples as “living in harmony with nature” have been used to create policies that narrowly confine indigenous peoples to particular places and lifestyles deemed to be environmentally sound (Richardson 2001). It seems logical therefore, to assert that indigenous peoples throughout the world are fighting for recognition because they are conscious of the fact that their true sense of belonging or identity is tied to their relationship with nature. Hence, the more they embrace “unchecked development” activities within their territories, the more they lose their identity. Three issues surround debates on indigenous peoples and the environment: Indigeneity, self-determination, and property rights.

The Objectives and Methodology

This paper presents an overview of these key issues, emphasizing the need for developers to see the interests of indigenous peoples and the environment as compatible with their own interests. To illustrate this observation, two case studies are used. In the first case, the internationally recognized struggle for political autonomy and environmental justice by the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria is revisited. In the second case, the struggle of the little known Bakola-BaGyeli Pigmies of Cameroon is used to highlight the need for social welfare, economic stability, and environmental justice for the indigenous peoples of the world. In both cases, Oil companies and their activities are presented as a foe to these indigenous peoples and their homelands. The Ogoni case is significant because it provides a positive example of the importance of an indigenous group’s “raison d’être” to its struggle for sustainable livelihoods, access to resources, etc. The Bakola-BaGyeli Pigmies case is vital in drawing contrast to the Ogoni case in terms of global recognition. Despite a common geographical location (gulf of Guinea) and a common enemy (oil companies) with the Ogoni, the Bakola-BaGyeli Pigmies’ struggle is almost unheard of by the international community. Why? I contend with Bob Clifford’s “marketing of rebellion” thesis that indigenous peoples must market themselves in order to preserve a way of life, in particular that which pertains to property rights and self-determination.

Indigeneity

The question of defining indigenous people has been challenging to both academics and policy makers for a long time. According to Alcida (1998), the concept of indigenous peoples is of colonial origin. The concept was first conceived by the European colonists as "natives", "Indians", "aboriginals", and "savages". These appellations often carry some stigma, which is a misrepresentation of who indigenous peoples really are. The United Nations, together with many human rights advocacy groups, have conducted campaigns to deconstruct this negative impression about indigenous peoples. Also, ethnobotanists and ethnobiologists like Darrell Posey in the Brazilian Amazon have done much to demonstrate that indigenous peoples are constantly changing their environment and increasing the biological diversity of their ecosystems. The efforts of these groups and individuals are directed towards empowerment of indigenous peoples with the hope that in the process, indigeneity will be redefined.

Despite numerous international laws on the rights of indigenous peoples in particular, and the rights of human beings in general (with some in existence for more than half a century), and despite examples of indigenous peoples defining and securing environmental justice in North America (LaDuke 2005) and in South America and Central Asia (shown by the International Environmental Network's (IEN) track record), much remains to be done to define and secure environmental justice for indigenous peoples around the world, particularly in Africa. Why have these international laws and individual efforts failed to adequately protect indigenous peoples of the world? Why is it difficult to define and secure environmental justice for the world's indigenous peoples? What is central to these questions is the issue of rights and justice for the indigenous peoples. Rights and justice in this context is determined by the degree of freedom and equity in the distribution of benefits and burdens. In most cases indigenous communities are robbed of their rights to participate in matters that concern them and are not given equitable share of benefits derived from resources in their homeland. Justice is not done when indigenous peoples are kept out of the limelight and not given the chance or opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the wellbeing of their communities.

Self-determination: Win-win or Win-lose Outcome?

In the early 1980s the concept of "self-determination" was put forward by a United Nation's working group on the problems of discrimination against indigenous populations (UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/l.566 1982). According to the report of this group, the international community can better define and understand indigenous peoples if the indigenous people themselves determine who they are. Following this UN study, it was agreed that indigenous peoples are culturally distinct groups traditionally regarded and self-defined as "descendants of the original inhabitants of areas which they share a strong spiritual and economic attachment" (Richardson 2001, 1). The granting of the right of self-determination to indigenous peoples has encountered serious problems, especially within nation-states. The struggle over this concept of self determination can be traced back to the late 1950s and early 1960s when colonizers found it difficult to grant independence to the colonized and still have to influence decisions they make in governing themselves. In the same way the nation-state finds it difficult to grant special rights to a segment of its population and still have to take control over issues directly affecting this segment of its population. What is common to these two scenarios is that the parties involved seemed to be overtaken by the "win-lose" situation and do not see self-determination as a "win-win" situation. Even though there has been a long history of contentions between indigenous

peoples and their ruling nation-states as outlined by Joyson Clay in Barbara Rose Johnston's 1994 edited volume, *Who Pays the Price?*, it is possible for nation-states to fully grant indigenous peoples the right of self-determination and still fulfill their responsibilities of maintaining environmental protection and ensuring sustainable development actions. This is so because, according to Cassese cited by Richardson, "only the entire population of an existing nation-state constitutes a people with a right of self-determination. Distinct populations within a nation-state merely have the rights to "internal" as against "external" self-determination without any right of secession" (Richardson 2001, 1).

The question is, how do nations "internalize" self-determination when the concept itself carries traits of independence, self control, self will, and right of choice? The answer to this question lies in the ability of both parties to work within the norms of international laws and treaties without having the feeling of being the "loser" or, in other words, being cheated or exploited by the other party. Such a negative feeling on the part of indigenous peoples can only be eradicated by empowering them and making them part of the system that is responsible for laws and treaties governing them. On the part of the nation-state, it needs to realize that national territorial integrity can not be compromised if it exercises control and justly governs with the powers bestowed on them by its people without favor.

Even though indigenous peoples are powerless and have little or no influence when it comes to modern nation-state building, state governments have to recognize the indispensable role indigenous peoples play in sustaining the environment. For example, according to a document by a UN sessional working group on the implementation of the outcomes of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), many of the areas of highest biological diversity on the planet are inhabited by indigenous peoples (UNEP/CBD 1996). The document asserts that more than two-thirds of the world's biological resources are within the territories of indigenous peoples.

On this background, one can equate marginalization and inadequate protection of indigenous peoples and their homelands to destruction or lack of respect for the environment. States therefore have to work in close relation with indigenous peoples, recognizing their rights and spiritual tie to the environment as their reason for existence.

Property Rights and Environmental Management

One of the biggest sources of transformation for indigenous societies and their environment is the incursion of extractive industries and large-scale development projects on indigenous homelands. These extractive resource projects on indigenous lands are among the most controversial projects on the planet and have been the focus of numerous campaigns in the international community. Measures have been put in place (*Convention on Biodiversity, the Kari-Oca Declaration, the ILO Convention-169, the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, the CITES Convention* etc.) to protect the Indigenous peoples and their environment, yet the assault on indigenous cultures continues unabated. Why has the international community been unable to stop this assault on indigenous cultures? Even though local, national, regional, and international laws call for environmental impact assessment (EIA) of projects, Indigenous communities seem not to benefit from this move. The lifestyle and the environment of the indigenous peoples are still affected even when EIAs precede development projects. Why? The reason is that too often projects are executed on the bases of false EIA reports. Even in situations

were EIAs are properly carried out, projects are executed without, or only partially considering outcomes of EIAs.

In cases where indigenous peoples are due compensation, they are often left in dispute and disappointment as they do not get the benefits they are promised. Even the little benefit they receive is unequally distributed. When outcomes of EIAs are not followed and when communities are not compensated for what they lose at the expense of development projects, then environmental justice is not done. These ties in with Osheronko's assertion that the cost and benefit of development schemes such as mining, oil and gas extraction, logging, and the building of dams and roads are often unequally distributed. He argues that indigenous groups have always endured a disproportionate share of the cost and benefit of development projects in their homelands (Osheronko 1995).

Most of the time, because they are not well empowered and informed, indigenous groups misuse their property rights. They turn to be very myopic when they negotiate deals with giant developers. In many cases indigenous peoples' struggle for recognition of ownership and involvement in development projects is for securing an equitable share of the benefits arising from the use of environmental resources and not as true stewards of the land (Rangan and Lane 2001). Indigenous peoples must be empowered and encouraged to put their stewardship of the environment ahead of the petit benefits offered them by developers of their land. Even though perceptions of indigenous peoples' impoverishment and underdevelopment are given as justification for "imposing" development projects on their homelands, such projects often do little more than exacerbate the symptoms of poverty that the so called "development" was supposed to treat. Even in situations where indigenous peoples are well informed of their rights, their own governments often quell any attempt to exercise these rights. It is this non-tolerant attitude of governments to indigenous peoples' rights on environment and development issues that spurs the desire for autonomy by some indigenous groups.

The cry for autonomy of unrepresented nations and peoples has echoed around the world. For some of these unrepresented nations and peoples, their struggle has won the hearts of many nations and groups around the world and has become a global cause. For others, their struggle has gone no farther than the bounds of their homeland. Why is this so? How do we account for the fact that the Dalai Lama's struggle for greater autonomy for the peoples of Tibet from the Chinese government has garnered international support while the struggle of a group like Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) for greater autonomy of the peoples of Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) from the Republic of Cameroon has gone relatively unheard? To answer this question one needs to first understand the raison d'être of a group seeking autonomy. The struggle for political autonomy, environmental justice by the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria, and the fight for social welfare, economic stability, and environmental justice by the Bakola-BaGyeli Pigmies of Cameroon is what pervades the two case studies that follow.

Nigeria: The Ogoni Peoples Experience

Ogoniland covers an area of about 100 000 km², east of Port Harcourt in Rivers State of Nigeria. Ogoniland has an interesting geography dominated by its coastal plain features of terraces and gentle undulating slopes. The plain landscape is occasionally interrupted by deep valleys, in which gentle flowing rivers cascade their way into the Atlantic Ocean. Most of Ogoniland was once part of the tropical rain forest that stretches across central Africa. Today, the

forest is almost completely loss as most of it has been cleared to create farm land. The Ogoni are one of the many indigenous groups inhabiting the Niger River Delta of Nigeria. They came to this location some 500 years ago and settled in six kingdoms, namely: Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Ken-Khna, Nyo-Khana, and Tai. Though settled in separate kingdoms, the peoples are culturally the same, hence their common identity, the Ogoni peoples.

Figure 1. Ogoniland in the Niger River Delta of Nigeria.

Land is the basic means of survival for the close to half a million Ogoni people. This arouses in them strong emotions and high sense of aesthetic quality. In this regard they see land (nature) as the source of life and do not think of themselves separate from the land (mother earth). They do not separate themselves from nature and from God. Man, nature, and God are one, hence the use of "Ogoniland" and "Ogoni people" are used interchangeably. It is therefore not a surprise that the plight of the Ogoni people has been the destruction of their homeland by industrial pollution caused by oil extraction. This plight began in the late 1950s when oil was first discovered in Ogoniland. While this discovery was and is a fortune to the self-centered, highly corrupt and tribalistic government of Nigeria, it has been the Ogoni's greatest misfortune. The establishment of Shell Oil Company in Ogoniland in 1958 has since led to a series of environmental problems in the Delta region as a whole and in Ogoniland in particular (Bob 2005). Among these problems are visible signs of air and water pollution, destruction of biodiversity, loss of fertile soil, degradation of farmland and damage to aquatic ecosystems. Water and air pollution has led to serious health issues in Ogoniland. In a 1996 interview with Dr. Owens Wiwa, one time medical practitional in Ogoniland, he noted that incidence of respiratory disease were higher in Ogoniland than in other parts of the country where he also practiced medicine (Multinational Monitor 1996). He also acknowledged that diseases such as

asthma, tuberculosis, bronchitis, and lung cancer were not uncommon among the indigenes of Ogoniland. Dr. Owens also pointed out that skin disease is a menace in the area.

This graphic health situation painted by Dr. Owen more than a decade ago has gotten wore. According to a 2005 Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization report, 87 oil spill sites have been identified in Ogoniland since 1996 (UNPO 2005). These oil spills are not unrelated to health and environmental problems that plague Ogoniland. Problems such as farmland degradation, damage of aquatic ecosystem, and poor forest foliage have been linked to chemicals contained in soot which is deposited on roofs of buildings and washed into the soil and rivers whenever it rains. Ground and water pollution also comes from gas flaring (75% of annual gas production), leakages from exposed pipe lines, oil spills, and dumping of oil waste.

These environmental problems have had tremendous impacts on the social, cultural, and economic way of life of the Ogoni peoples. Traditional sites, some of which contain ancestral groves, have been destroyed by pipe line tracks and oil spills. As a result, families can no longer pour libation to their ancestors and carry out other traditional rites. The artistic ability of wood carving and drum making of the Ogoni peoples that rely on the availability of specific wood type (iroko) has dwindled enormously, primarily due to loss of trees (wood) to make way for pipe lines. As a result, this artistic ability of the indigenous peoples of Ogoniland cannot be passed to younger generations.

The interdependent social way of life of the Ogoni peoples has been interrupted by the lavish life style of the refinery workers. Shell Company with its educated and highly skillful workforce has stratified the society. Educated workers live in well-furnished housing complexes, while a majority of people in the community live in dilapidated (as they did before oil workers arrived) houses and huts. This has created a social gap in the community, as the well-to-do oil workers do not interact with the less fortunate locals. This has led to tension between oil workers and the indigenous people as most of the oil workers are not from Ogoniland. The problem is further compounded by the exodus of indigenous sons and daughters of Ogoniland. Even though rural exodus was a problem in Ogoniland before the arrival of the oil company, their presence has exacerbated the problem. The few indigenes that are lucky to fine employment with the oil company live a better life than the rest of the peoples. This acts as a push factor to those who cannot find employment with the oil company. They are forced to migrate to urban centers in search of jobs. This rural urban migration breaks the social bond these sons and daughters of Ogoniland have with their families. Although oil accounts for about 90% of Nigeria's export earnings, the Ogoni peoples whose homeland sits on two-thirds of the oil fields and reserves are one of the most impoverished in Nigeria. The Ogoni peoples have never profited from oil export revenues and have instead suffered loses in their traditional economic activity, agriculture and fishing, due to water and soil pollution from acid rain and oil spills (UNPO 2005).

After suffering years of environmental injustice, ethnic discrimination, and economic exploitation by the Nigerian government and the oil giant Royal Dutch/Shell, the Ogoni people in 1990 found themselves on an old platform of struggle for political autonomy. The Ogoni Peoples' struggle for political autonomy began in the 1950s when Nigeria was preparing for independence from the British. As Nigeria was getting closer to having its independence, the Ogoni peoples and many other minority indigenous groups in the Niger delta feared suppression and domination by the major indigenous group, the Ibos. At independence, Nigeria was federated into three regions following the country's largest ethnic groups; the Housa-Fulani in the north

(29 percent), the Yurobas in the southwest (21 percent), and the Ibos in the southeast (18 percent). With this organization, the Ogoni peoples' concerns turned into reality. They found themselves under the control of the Ibos who dominate the entire delta region in terms of development, politics, and culture. For this reason, the Ogoni peoples decline to pledge support for Isaac Boro and Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu's declaration of the Niger Delta Republic in 1967. After the secession attempt in 1967 that left about a million people dead, the Ogoni peoples kept a low profile under the River State, one of the 12 Federal States that replaced the former ethnic regions. Due to growing international environmentalism, the Ogoni peoples in the late 1980s and early 1990s under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa revived their fifty years old struggle for political autonomy. Although the number of independent states has since grown to thirty six, the Ogoni people's demand for the creation of a Port Harcourt State has not been met.

Why the Ogoni Struggle has Gained International Recognition

It is not by accident that the Ogini struggle has gained international support. Under Ken Sara-Wiwa's leadership the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), in the early 1990s, engaged in a struggle with the ruthless military government of Nigeria for political autonomy. Apart from seeking political autonomy, Saro-Wiwa and his people protested ethnic discrimination, economic exploitation, and the destruction of their environment by the Nigerian government and the oil giant Royal Dutch/Shell. The struggle gained international support mainly because they were able to market themselves by developing and strengthening relationships with international organizations over the years (Bob 2005).

The way oppressive governments operate and how they present themselves in the international milieu is often beyond the understanding of its local people. Generally, governments have a better relationship with NGOs than with its own peoples. Local peoples often benefit from this relationship between their government and NGOs through what sociologists call "boomerang effect." That is, NGOs acting as middleman between the government and its people. MOSOP used the "boomerang effect" to draw the world's attention to their plight. Saro-Wiwa's close workings with international NGOs became an effective marketing strategy for the struggle of the Ogoni peoples. Two factors account for the global recognition of Ogoni's plight: a well defined raison d'être under the umbrella organization of MOSOP, and a close relationship with NGOs and INGOs.

Cameroon: The Bakola-Bagyeli Pygmy Experience

The way of life of a people is a definitive characteristic, which is passed on from generation to generation. For some groups, this definitive way of life is dependent upon the physical environment in which they live. This is generally true for indigenous peoples of the world. Their identity is tied to their natural environment which gives them a true sense of belonging. Therefore, exposure to "artificial" changes in the homelands of indigenous peoples is tantamount to distorting their identity. The development of sedentary life was the first major change in the way of life of indigenous peoples of the world. Thousands of years since this change began; some groups today still live the hunter-gatherer life led by their ancestors. One such group is the pygmies of Central Africa.

Until about 3000 B.C, the pygmies were the sole inhabitants of the Central African region. This central African indigenous group was infiltrated by another indigenous group from inland savanna West Africa, the Bantu peoples. Thus, contrary to popular belief, sub-Saharan Africa was not always inhabited by the Bantu speaking peoples but by the pygmies who still inhabit the Central African forest today (Diamond 1999). The plight of the pygmies began soon after they had contact with the Bantu peoples who began cutting down the forest, planting gardens and keeping cattle (Diamond 1999). This sedentary way of life began "distorting" the hunter-gatherer way of life of the indigenous Pygmy population. By changing their way of life, the Pygmy population began dwindling in size and was replaced by the Bantu population. The Bantu ancestral farmers also expanded southwards to displace another indigenous group in drier parts of subequatorial Africa, the Khoisan hunter-gatherers.

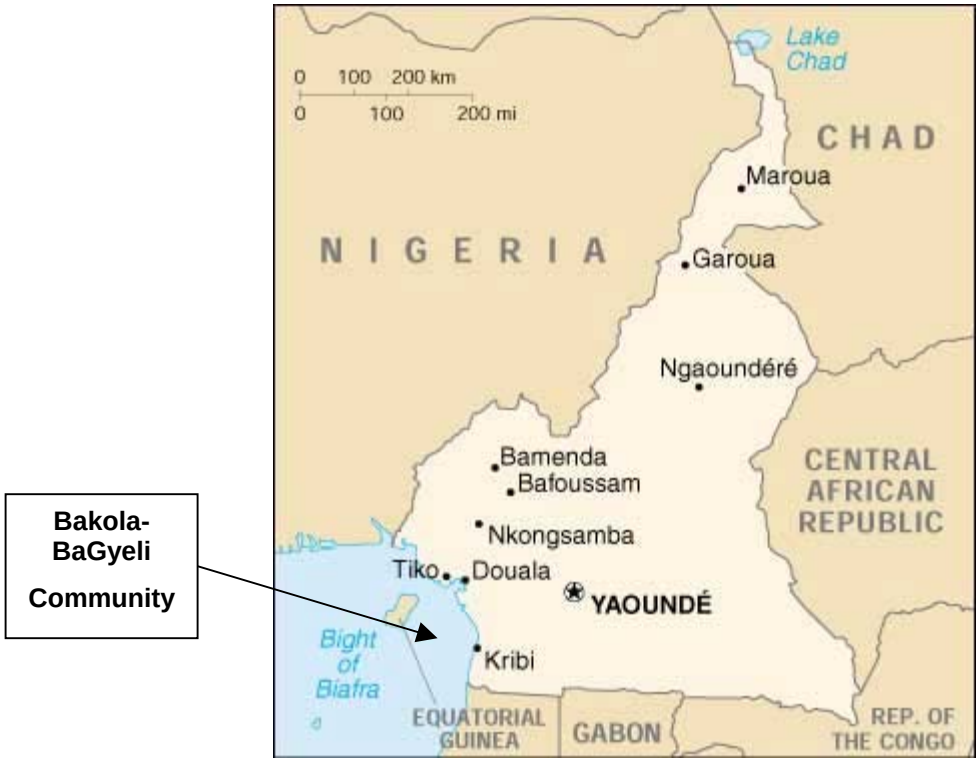

Figure 2. The Bakola-BaGyeli Community in Ocean Division, Kribi, Cameroon

Anthropologists have identified four major Indigenous pygmy groups that inhabit the Central African rain forest; the Baka, the Bakola-BaGyeli, the Aka, and the Bedzan-Tikar Pygmies. The southern part of Cameroon constitutes part of the Central Africa rain forest which is homeland to the Baka and the Bakola-BaGyeli surviving indigenous Pygmy population. Since the arrival of the Bantu peoples in Central Africa the Pygmies have never stopped losing their definitive traits and characteristics. This problem was compounded when the white colonizers arrived in the late 1800s introducing western civilization to the indigenous peoples. The

development of plantations, sawmills, roads, and lately oil pipelines in and around Pygmy homelands has been a threat to the survival of the Bakola-BaGyeli Pygmies of the Atlantic forest region of Cameroon.

The Bakola-BaGyeli Pygmies of Cameroon inhabit a secluded portion of the forest covering roughly 10 square miles. Unlike the Ogoni peoples, the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples are not seeking political autonomy from the government of Cameroon, but demand social welfare, economic stability, and environmental justice. Their plight is economic exploitation and environmental destruction by the government of Cameroon and oil companies undertaking the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project. The project is a joint venture of the governments of Chad and Cameroon, ExxonMobil of the US (40%), Petronas of Malaysia (35%), and Chevron of the US (25%). The project is also partly funded by the World Bank Group. These oil giants claim that the project has fulfilled all World Bank's environmental requirements, including environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project. According to a 2003 Inspection Panel report, the EIA for the project was not properly done. EIA for the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project was conducted under the directives of ExxonMobil and Petronas officials who have the influence of the US frame of an EIA, completely different from Chad or Cameroon frames, which are developing countries. EIA practices vary from country to country. In a study of the practice of EIA between Canada and the United States, Mbatu (2003) showed that EIA is a dynamic process often biased by social, political and cultural lineage of the undertaker. It is not a surprise therefore that despite claims of a sound EIA preceding the Chad-Cameroon oil project, many environmental problems have appeared only within the first two years of the project's expected twenty five year duration.

Problems plaguing the Bakola-BaGyeli pygmy community include environmental, social, economic and political. Environmental problems include oil spills, water pollution, destruction of biodiversity, and disturbance of the forest and aquatic ecosystems. According to a report by the Center for Environment and Development (CED), a Cameroon based environmental watch group, wells and other drinking water sources along the pipeline route were already being polluted even before the project was inaugurated in June of 2004. These polluted waters have been the cause of several water-borne diseases within the Bakola-BaGyeli community. The Bakola-BaGyeli pygmies have been living in harmony in this forest region for thousands of years, demonstrating with their skillful and selective hunting and gathering strategies how to be the best stewards of the environment. The pipeline project has changed this admirable way of life of the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples. They lost a significant portion of their hunting and gathering ground to the Campo Ma'an Project, which is an "offset" (compensating program) project to the pipeline project (COTCO 1999). Also, the main fishing area for this indigenous group was destroyed during the construction of the sea terminal, disturbing aquatic ecosystem and depriving the people of their livelihoods (CED 2004).

On the social front, the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples have suffered and continue to suffer social division and marginalization as a result of partiality in resolution of compensation claims. Individual and community compensations were either partially made or not made at all (Kenrick and Jackson 2001). Exposure of this relatively closed community to the influx of workers and job seekers has led to increase sexual activities among its youths. This has made the Ocean Division one of the highest in the number of reported AIDS cases in Cameroon (IP 2003). Also, as a result of land losses to the pipeline project, the Bakola-BaGyeli community now experience fierce competition with other local communities over access to agricultural land.

All these environmental, social and health impacts have acted as a draw back to the local economy of the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples. Their contribution to the fishing industry has dropped, and income from the sale of bush meat has also declined (IP 2003).

Inefficiencies are partly to blame for the plight of the Bakola-BaGyeli people. The Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP), which was supposed to be the people's best bet, was completely flawed from its inception. The IPP is a document that lays out a plan of action for protecting indigenous peoples and their communities against programs that impinge on their social, economic and environmental well-being. Such a document cannot be binding if the concerned indigenous peoples are not a chief participant in its preparation. Unfortunately the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples had little or no input to the pipeline project's IPP. The lack of Bakola-BaGyeli people's input to the IPP led to a major deficiency of the plan, as the organization that was charged with implementation of the IPP, the Foundation for Environment and Development in Cameroon (FEDEC), misdirected funds aimed for the Bakola-BaGyeli community. A $600,000 (CFA330 000,000) endowment provided by the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company (COTCO) was paid to organizations in which the Bakola-BaGyeli people have no connections and to fund the project in which they have no control (Ndobe and Aboe 2004). Deficiency of the IPP has been acknowledged by an Inspection Panel (IP 2003), set up by the World Bank to report on the activities of the oil pipe line project.

Why the Bakola-Bagyeli Peoples' Struggle has not Gained Global Recognition

The Bakola-BaGyeli peoples' plight is a serious problem as that of the Ogoni peoples, yet their struggle has had little national or global recognition. Why? Looking at the Ogoni peoples "success" strategy, we understand why the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples' plight has gone relatively unheard of. The Ogoni peoples' case study analysis showed that they have a raison d'être as they are well organized under an umbrella organization, the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni Peoples (MOSOP). In the case of the Bakola-BaGyeli peoples, there is no such umbrella organization. They are loosely organized in small family groups with no effective communication; hence they lack a visible reason for existence. Nevertheless, Bob (2005) argues that having a reason for existence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a group's global recognition. In his book *The Marketing of Rebellion* Bob outlines a five point strategic approach for the success of groups seeking autonomy and global recognition: winning the support of NGOs; development and retention of this support; systematic organization of economic and political resources; organized, dynamic and systematic marketing structure; and confirming the needs and agendas of distant audiences (Bob 2005, 4).

The leader of the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria, Ken Saro-Wiwa, understood the importance of a strategic approach to marketing the plight of his people and used that to tell the world what is happening in the Niger Delta. The Bakola-BaGyeli peoples lack such a strategy in their struggle. Whether a group's struggle is for political autonomy, economic equity, social wellbeing, or environmental justice, a defined strategic approach is indispensable for the group's success.

It is important to note here that it took well over fifty years before the global community acknowledged and responded to the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria. The Bakola-BaGyeli peoples of Cameroon are only in their third year of struggle, and may need more time in order to placate the

international community to rally behind them in their fight for social welfare, economic stability, and environmental justice from ExxonMobil, its partners, and the Government of Cameroon. The problem is that the state of their environment might degrade to an irreversible point by the time they organize themselves into a group with a visible raison d'être.

Conclusion

We can not deny the fact that the international community has been trying to protect the world's indigenous peoples and their environment. This is evidence by the numerous treaties and conventions on the rights of indigenous peoples and the environment. But much still has to be done as far as effective implementation of these treaties and conventions is concerned. Development must never be valued more than the distinct way of life of indigenous peoples of the world and their environment. As Jared Diamond (2005) argues in his latest book *Collaps: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed,* "the interests of big businesses, environmentalists, and the society as a whole coincide more often than you might guess" (Diamond 2005, 442). Diamond's assertion is correct only when these parties express mutual values. The value accorded to an oil pipeline project in Cameroon, dam construction in Ghana, oil exploration in Alaska, or industrial forest exploitation in Brazil should equally be accorded to the distinct way of life of an Inuit in the heartland of Canada, a Bushman in the Kalahari Desert of Namibia, or a Pigmy in the Congo forest. After all, valuing the way of life of these indigenous peoples of the world means valuing the world's cultural and biological diversity since many of the areas of highest biological diversity on the planet are inhabited by indigenous peoples.

The cry of the Ogoni peoples has been heard around the world. Although Saro-Wiwa fought a good fight for a just cause he nevertheless paid a price any true liberator will pay for the rights and freedom of his people; death! The assassination of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other environmentalists in 1995 did not end the struggle they died for. Like Saro-wiwa and the eight others who were assassinated for standing up for their rights, some indigenous men and women around the world are willing to defend their homelands to the point of death, as some literally drive their struggle with the zeal of "live and let die."

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