Abstract

Climate change, vulnerability and disasters:
Implications for human security in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Climate change, conflicts, and the squeeze on natural resources due to population growth and environmental degradation are intensifying the poverty and vulnerability of many people especially in the developing countries. The diversity of these challenges and of how individuals, households, businesses, governments, and civil society deals with them are best understood through analysis of their local dimensions. Niger Delta has emerged as one of the most ecologically sensitive region in Nigeria. With an estimated population of about 140 million in 2007, resources (oil and gas) from Niger Delta are the main source of revenue for the Nigerian state, accounting for about 97% of the country's total export. The region is highly susceptible to adverse environmental changes occasioned by climate change because of its coastal location. The already deplorable state of the environment as occasioned by oil production and environmental degradation, coupled with other innumerable social and environmental problems imply that the rise in sea level and associated biophysical and socio-economic impacts will be much. One prediction is that Nigeria would lose close to US$19 billion as a result of catastrophe in the next ten years, while, at least, 80% of the inhabitants of the oil-rich Niger Delta would be displaced. This prediction when juxtaposed with the current vulnerability and increasing incidents of disasters has a lot of implications for human security. The people of the region are highly dependent on their environment for their source of livelihood. The economic activities of the people have been largely distorted as a result of the environmental degradation caused by climate change and exploration and exploitation activities of multinational oil companies. The increasing scarcity of land has accelerated the stress on available resources and this has engendered varying conflicts that have become incessant in recent years and is predicted to increase in the nearest future. This study, derived from empirical survey, examines the linkages between climate change, existing vulnerability situation and disasters incidents and the implications for human security in the Region. Two surveys were carried out. The first was a local levels survey that examined the vulnerability situation in selected communities while the second focused on disasters and emergency preparedness of relevant institutions, community, government and non-government organisations. Given the existing high level of poverty in the Region and in Nigeria, any significant disruption in oil exports due to conflicts triggered by increasing environmental degradation, disasters and related climate change impacts will further worsen the existing volatile situation in the Region and serve as a threat to human security in the country.