Poverty, pipeline vandalisation/ explosion and human security: Integrating disaster management into poverty reduction in Nigeria

Freedom Onuoha⋆

This paper interrogates the common official refrain to attribute vandalisation-induced pipeline explosion to poverty in the country. It argues that although poverty has explanatory relevance in terms of the ubiquity of oil pipeline explosion, such attribution conceals more than it reveals: it clearly shows that the poor are the direct and hardest hit in oil pipeline explosion in Nigeria, but conceals the fact that rich vandalisation barons are behind these threats to human security; it conceals the contradiction between the material circumstances of the victims and the sophisticated technology deployed in such nefarious acts. While it reveals the disempowerment of the poor to negotiate their survival outside the lure of fuel scooping, it conceals the power of the barons to easily negotiate their freedom from conviction. Also, it conceals the seeming contradiction of perceptions of security between the government officials and the poor citizens. The paper therefore argues that it is this prevalent situation that not only accounts for the frequency of pipeline vandalisation, but provides reasons that government fails to pay compensation to victims of explosion or to evolve proactive disaster response strategies. Thus, it advocates the integration of a disaster management framework into government's overall effort of poverty reduction in the country.

⋆ **Freedom Onuoha is a research fellow with the African Centre for Strategic Research and studies (ACSRS) of the National War College – Nigeria.**

Introduction

In recent times Nigeria has witnessed all manner of disasters, including plane crashes, bomb explosions, flooding from collapsed dams, fire outbreaks, oil pipeline explosions, road accidents and the collapse of buildings. What is often in doubt is the nature of government's response to these sources of human insecurity. The country recently has witnessed cascading incidences of oil pipeline explosion which are a major threat to human security.

In Nigeria, whenever there has been a pipeline explosion, the official refrain has been that those who lost their lives are greedy people who resort to vandalisation to make quick money. Thus, one obvious judgement that follows is that poverty and greed are at the root of the frequent attacks on these pipelines. Undoubtedly, this judgement (as we hope to establish in this article) is not entirely wrong, but left at that, it not only conceals more than it reveals, but tends to rationalise or reinforce the official disposition not to pay compensation to victims of oil pipeline disaster, or to evolve proactive disaster prevention and response strategies to contain these incidences as part of measures of reducing poverty in the country and enhancing human security.

This paper seeks to put poverty in its proper context vis-à-vis pipeline vandalisation/explosion and human security. It explores this by identifying the causes, trends and dimensions of pipeline vandalisation as well as its impact on human security.

Conceptual clarification

Three key terms form the pillars of this work: poverty, pipeline vandalisation and human security.

There are as many definitions of poverty as there are people, scholars, analysts and institutions trying to grapple with it.

In the context of this paper, poverty refers to a situation of deprivation in which an individual or group of individuals in a society lack the requisite resources, opportunities or means of livelihood to lead a long, healthy and satisfactory life by being unable to provide for their basic life requirements such as water, food, shelter, clothing, sanitation and a minimum level of medication.

Usually at national level, and for policy direction and administrative convenience to single out those to be assisted or regarded as poor, the incidence of poverty in a country is measured in terms of the percentage of the people living below the poverty line. The poverty line refers to the income level below which a minimum nutritionally adequate

diet, plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable. It is measured in terms of the proportion of the population living on less than one US dollar a day. It is a benchmark that is usually used by the United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, and governments to measure the prevalence of poverty. It is estimated that over 70 per cent of Nigeria's population live below the poverty line. Thus, when we refer to poverty as a factor in the incidence of oil pipeline vandalisation and its associated fire disaster, it is used in this sense.

Pipeline vandalisation, as it is used in this context, refers to illegal or unauthorised activities that involve the destruction of oil pipelines to disrupt supply or the puncturing of oil pipelines to siphon crude oil or its refined products in order to appropriate it for personal use or for sale in the black market or any other outlet. It includes such acts as oil bunkering, breaking oil pipelines to siphon fuel, scooping fuel from burst oil pipes and the deliberate act of oil terrorism.[1]

In Nigeria, pipeline vandalisation is usually regarded as an act of sabotage. It is a capital offence under the Petroleum Act and is covered by the Criminal Justice Decree of 1975 (miscellaneous provisions) (Phil-Eze 2004:278). In recent times, the incidence of pipeline vandalisation and the associated fire disaster has caused serious destruction of the ecosystem of host communities, oil spillage and environmental pollution, destruction of farmlands and properties, and the loss of lives.

Security has been defined from state-centric, militaristic and strategic calculations. It has been seen as the sum total of the vital national interest of the state. A vital national interest is one for which a nation is willing to resort to force or war. Concepts of national security will vary from state to state in direct proportion to their individual willingness to risk conflict or war at any given time (Hartmann 1983:13). In this sense, the emphasis was on the protection of the state and the regime in power. This conceptualisation of security was greatly informed by the political and security milieu of the Cold War era. However, with the Cold War receding and the emergence of new threats to the survival of individuals as well as states, scholars not only began to re-conceptualise security but to emphasise such concepts as cooperative security, societal security, comprehensive security, collective security, and human security.

While the term 'human security' may be of recent analytical relevance and usage, it is not the case that human security suddenly developed out of nowhere and that the need for it did not exist in the past. Rather, the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have served to underpin orthodox security and policy formation did not recognise, include or value it (Thomas 1999:5).

Thus, the conceptualisation of security from the human security prism represents a paradigmatic shift from orthodox security thinking which privileges protection of state

power to that which absorbs human beings and their complex social and economic relations as the primary referents. It is premised on the fact that the security of all persons ought to be a moral goal of all governments and their citizens, not a narrowly conceived or poorly justified national security that protects state power or personal interests of privileged elite (Nelles 2003:1).

The specific term 'human security' was officially introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report (UNDP 1994:22).

Two main aspects of human security are identified in the report: safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression, and protection from sudden disruptions in the pattern of daily life, whether in homes, jobs, or communities. Threats to human security were therefore subsumed under seven key dimensions of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.

In this sense, Thomas (1999:3) conceives human security as a condition of existence in which basic material needs are met and in which human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of the community, can be realised. Human security from this perspective has both qualitative and quantitative aspects. On one level it is about the fulfilment of basic material needs, and on another it is about the achievement of human dignity, which incorporates personal autonomy, control over one's life, and unhindered participation in the life of the community

For Hubert (2001:62), human security does not supplant national security. A human security perspective, according to him, asserts that the security of the state is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means of ensuring security of people. Thus, state security and human security are mutually reinforcing and supportive.

Therefore, human security as conceived here entails freedom from actual and potential threats to human life, safety and survival which may arise as a result of human actions or inactions, or from natural disaster such as flood, earthquake, famine, drought, disease and other non-man-made calamitous events resulting in death, human suffering and material damage. In this sense, human security is one focal element of national security. Nevertheless, the emphasis on human security primarily derives from three basic convictions, namely the sanctity and inviolability of human life; the universality and dignity of human rights; and the existential imperatives of and value for individual safety in a world laden with multifarious threats. Hence, any threat which thwarts or curtails an individual's entitlement to these three core values borders on human security and, by extension, national security.

In this sense, the responsibility to provide for and protect these rights is usually the challenge of the government. The *grand norm* of Nigeria is not blind to this. Section 14

(2) C of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria categorically emphasises this point when it provides that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999:10).

Thus, the irreducible minimum of human security entails prevention and minimisation of threats to human rights, safety and lives. One basic advantage of the human security approach is that it conceives of security in terms of the real-life, everyday experience of human beings, vis-à-vis the importance for understanding the sources of such threats to human life and for proffering strategies for addressing these threats. Like other dimensions of security – national security, economic security and food security – human security entails recognising the importance of the people's security needs, side by side with those of states, minimising risks, adopting preventive measures to reduce human vulnerabilities and taking remedial action when preventive measures fail (Nsirimovu 2005:184).

Oil pipeline network and vandalisation: An overview

Nigeria, with a land mass of 923 768 square kilometres (356 669 square miles), is undoubtedly a large country with a burgeoning economy that is heavily dependent on petroleum. The petroleum industry was born about fifty years ago when oil was first discovered in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in 1956, in present-day Bayelsa State. To enhance the distribution of crude oil products from the oil-rich region of the Niger Delta to other parts of the country, a grid of oil pipelines was constructed to interlink some states at strategic locations.

Nigeria has a total network of 5 001 kilometres of oil pipelines, consisting of 4 315 kilometres of multi-product pipelines and 666 kilometres of crude oil pipelines. These pipelines criss-cross the country, forming a mesh that interlinks the 22 petroleum storage depots, the four refineries at Port Harcourt (I and II), Kaduna and Warri, the off-shore terminals at Bonny and Escravos, and the jetties at Atlas Cove, Calabar, Okirika and Warri.

The Pipeline and Product Marketing Company (PPMC), a subsidiary of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), uses this system of oil pipelines to transport crude oil to the refineries in Port Harcourt (I and II), Warri and Kaduna – a total distance of 719 kilometres. The multi-product pipelines are used to move products from the refineries/import-receiving jetties to the 22 petroleum storage deports all over the country. The storage infrastructure, which consists of 22 loading depots linked by pipelines of various diameters ranging from 6 to 18 inches, has combined installed capacities of 1 266 890 (PMS), 676 400 (DPK), 1 007 900 (AGO),

and 74 000 (ATK) m^3 tonnes (Special Committee on the Review of Petroleum Product Supply and Distribution 2000:10). The entire distribution network is made up of a number of systems (page 33):

1   System 2A   Warri–Benin–Ore–Mosimi

2   System 2AX   Auchi–Benin

3   System 2B   (a) Atlas Cove–Mosimi–Ibadan–Ilorin
                     (b) Mosimi–Satellite (Ejigbo in Lagos)
                     (c) Mosimi–Ikeja

4   System 2C   Escravos–Warri–Kaduna (crude lines)

5   System 2D   (a) Kaduna–Zaria–Kano–Zaria–Gusau
                     (b) Kaduna–Jos–Gombe–Maidugiri

6   System 2E   PH–Aba–Enugu–Makurdi

7   System 2EX   PH–Aba–Enugu–Makurdi–Yola

8   System 2CX   (a) Enugu–Auchi (interconnection)
                     (b) Auchi–Suleja–Kaduna
                     (c) Suleja–Minna

9   System 2DX   Jos-Gombe

To ensure the safety of these pipelines before they were laid, the government acquired 3,5 metres wide right of way (ROW) on each side of the pipelines and the pipes were buried a metre deep to avoid accidental contacts, since they transverse the length and breadth of the country. Although most of these pipelines are buried underground, recent experience has shown that their integrity and safety have been compromised because vandals now incessantly tap into this huge artery of the lifeblood of Nigeria's economic wealth. For instance, in 1995 there were seven reported cases of vandalisation. In 1996 it was 33. It later rose to 34 and 57 in 1997 and 1998 respectively (Special Committee on the Review of Petroleum Product Supply and Distribution 2000:34). However, since 1999, statistics on oil pipeline vandalisation are staggering, since 497 cases were reported in 1999.

Furthermore, recent statistics released by the group managing director of NNPC reveals that the frequency of such attacks on the pipelines has assumed an astronomical dimension. Statistical evidence shows that Port Harcourt, which recorded about 600 line

breaks in 2003, had about 1 650 line breaks from January to September 2006, while Warri area moved from only 100 line breaks to 600 during the same period. Also, Mosimi area, which recorded only 50 line breaks in 2003, reported about 375 between January and September 2006. In the north, where such occurrences used to be rare, Kaduna and Gombe areas have registered frequent line breaks (Amanze-Nwachukwu & Ogbu 2007:14). Such frequent attacks on the pipelines have accounted for recurrent pipeline fire disasters in recent years that have put the lives of many people in serious jeopardy, including the lives of those living around the routes of these pipelines.

Poverty and pipeline vandalisation/ explosion: A critique

In a country where 85 per cent of oil revenues accrue to 1 per cent of a population of 140 million people; where perhaps US$100 billion of US$400 billion in oil revenues since 1970 have been misappropriated; where between 1965 and 2004 the per capita income fell from US$250 to US$212 and income distribution deteriorated markedly over the same period; and where between 1970 and 2000, the number of people subsisting on less than one dollar per day grew from 36 per cent to more than 70 per cent: from 19 million to a staggering 90 million, widespread poverty, discontent or failed expectations must have explanatory relevance in the upsurge of pipeline vandalisation. But to characterise it loosely would be highly unrewarding. Hence, the critical question becomes thus: how is poverty implicated in pipeline vandalisation or how do we understand or characterise the place of poverty in the incidence of pipeline vandalisation, which usually results in fire outbreaks?

The common and usual official refrain each time there is an incidence of pipeline vandalisation or rupture is that poverty is at the root of it. Thus, the poor – the constituency that lacks a voice in shaping national security concerns – are implicated. While we may not reject this point entirely, we contend that it is rewarding to probe deeper into the reality of oil pipeline vandalisation in order to capture the place of poverty in these incidences and to understand why, despite the colossal loss of lives and property, government has yet to deliver a proactive disaster response and management framework and to integrate this into the broader poverty reduction strategy.

Here, we contend that to attribute pipeline vandalisation and the associated fire disaster to poverty conceals more than it reveals. It clearly reveals that the poor are the direct and hardest hit in oil pipeline fire disaster, but conceals the fact that the rich vandalisation barons have been behind this source of colossal mortality in recent times. For instance, in the early 1990s up to the terminal point of military rule, vandals, mainly unemployed youths operating in remote areas and communities where oil pipelines pass, punctured the pipes or took advantage of ruptured or leaking pipes to siphon fuel or other petroleum

products into drums, plastic containers or storage cans for sale in the black market. The technology involved was quite rudimentary, involving the use of funnels, drilling tools and plastic hose to siphon the products.

In the case of leaking pipes, poor villagers or residents of such communities gathered at the spot and use clothes or foam to soak the products from dug-out earth holes and squeeze the content into plastic buckets and containers, which they usually sold to unsuspecting motorists. Given this situation, the era recorded quite insignificant cases of pipeline vandalisation. For instance, between 1993 and 1998, there were only 146 cases.

With the return to democracy, the trend assumed a venomous dimension, thus revealing the true picture of its undercurrents. Since 1999, statistics on oil pipeline vandalisation have become staggering, with 497 of such cases being reported in 1999. In 2000 the greatest ever number of cases was recorded, about 909. In 2001, it was 461 cases, while 507 cases were reported in 2002, and 300 cases in the first six months of 2003.[2] The incessant vandalisation of pipelines demonstrates that not only are some rich barons behind this criminality, but they also have the capacity to deploy modern technologies and recruit the services of security agents in the process. As the report of the Special Committee on the Review of Petroleum Product Supply and Distribution aptly contends, vandalisation has become very lucrative, attracting rich and powerful individuals who have become vandalisation barons (Special Committee on the Review of Petroleum Product Supply and Distribution 2000:11).

Attributing incessant vandalisation to poverty conceals the contradiction between the material circumstances of the victims and the sophisticated technology deployed in the nefarious acts. What is often lost in such thinking is that the poor do not have access to the kind of technology used in the process. For instance, a nurse who commented on the class of victims of the Jesse fire disaster contended that:

> Many of the dead were women and children. Some were still clutching bottles, plastic cups, funnels and cans they were using to collect fuel from the pipeline, which had been leaking for three days. The burnt body of one woman was found with her dead baby still strapped to her back. Many of the other victims were farmers and villagers sleeping in their homes when the explosion occurred.[3]

Paradoxically, it has been determined that the vandals at the Egborode, Oviri Court, broke the pipeline through hot tapping, a process restricted to experts in the oil industry.[4] As Bassey has cogently argued, what is happening is a methodical stealing of fuel from the pipelines. It is systematically done by people who have the technical know-how, who have the equipment and who know where the valves and manifolds are (Bassey, quoted in Enogholase 2007:5). In the view of Adeniyi (2007:72):

The question we should even ask is whether there is no collusion between the vandals, the police and some NNPC staff. Because the ease with which these vandals identify the pipelines buried in remote areas, sometimes six feet below the ground, shows some expert knowledge. The confidences with which they have been operating also reveal that they definitely have powerful godfathers.

Furthermore, another dimension of poverty and pipeline vandalisation is the contradictory perception of security between the top government officials and the majority of the poor population. Poverty is a common thread that interlocks over 70 per cent of the population. For the poverty-ridden majority, security is defined in terms of the bare imperative of survival. In this sense, the only word their psyche can understand is survival, and this can assume any form in so far as their needs are met. This desperation on the part of the majority of poor was captured by a newspaper editorial:

> If we don't scoop fuel from here, hunger will kill us. If we die from explosion here, it is still death out of want. We might as well stay here, scoop and hope to survive (*Thisday* 2007:15).

This explains why, under such conditions, a leak attracts hundreds of Nigerians – men and women, young and old – seeking free fuel, regardless of the inherent dangers. However, for the rich and top government officials, security entails free flow of oil revenue into the government purse – the pool from which they derive fabulous and mostly unaccountable wealth. In this context, pipeline vandalisation is a threat to security to the extent that it reduces the size of the pie and is not too relevant to the safety and wellbeing of the people, for whom government exists in the first instance.

Finally, it reveals the seeming weakness and disempowerment of the poor to negotiate their survival outside the lure of fuel scooping and conceals the pervasive influence of the barons to negotiate their freedom from the full weight of the law.

For instance, one recent development in the country portrays this irony. On 2 October 2006, the vandals arrested by the police in Awawa, in Kwali Division of Abuja, alleged that:

> Big time vandals in the area use fuels tankers to siphon crude oil from the broken pipes and have not been arrested. We were not the ones that broke these pipes. We only went with jerry cans to fetch the fuel gushing out of the pipe to avoid wastage and they arrested us (Abubakar 2006:32).

This was corroborated by a trader, Bala Ahmed (cited in Abubakar 2006:32):

> The private vehicle of a council chairman was recently used for transporting siphoned fuel. Some vandals also named a council chairman as their sponsor.

He gave them money, arms and tools to go and vandalise pipelines. The chairman was not arrested, even for a minute. When you go to the NNPC pump station at Awawa, you will see some vehicles parked there. They were seized from a vandal. The man is still around and has not been arrested.

Vandalisation is a crime; however, the weight of the law in achieving deterrence and punishing offenders is modulated by one's economic class (poverty). Through the poverty lens, we can better appreciate the disempowerment of the weak and the power of the rich. Because pipeline vandalisation is a 'bailable' offence , the power of the rich to negotiate their freedom is easily deployed. As Osiyemi (cited in Adeniyi 2007:72) has stated, the moment these people are arrested, the police, apparently acting in concert, ensure that the matter is taken to court immediately and the next day they are back in business. This situation explains why vandalisation continues to thrive, even with the law prohibiting it.

Pipeline networks, vandalisation and human security

Having contextualised how poverty is implicated in most incidences of pipeline vandalisation, it is pertinent to briefly examine how pipeline vandalisation and its associated fire disaster impinge on human security. Pipeline vandalisation threatens human security in different ways, namely threats to human rights, safety, and life; destruction of means of livelihood; inducement of internal displacement and the dislocation of family structure.

Undoubtedly, pipeline vandalisation and attempts by local residents to scoop fuel from vandalised or leaking pipelines constitutes one of the major causes of mortality in recent times. Adeniyi (2007:15) has asserted that for any scourge other than war to consume more than 2,297 nationals in seven separate incidents is simply disastrous. It is tragic that eight years after the first major pipeline inferno claimed over 1 000 lives and nearly wiped out two communities, the issue scarcely registers on the national agenda. It is believed that no fewer than 5 000, including innocent persons, might have been killed in pipeline explosions since 1998 (Amanze-Nwachukwu 2007:23).

Although statistics in table 1 lay no claim to being comprehensive, they are indicative of this recurrent threat to human lives.

Apart from the destruction of lives and infliction of physical and permanent injuries, the incidence of pipeline vandalisation, with its associated fire disaster, has become a disturbing source of destruction of the means of livelihood and properties. Crude oil and refined petroleum products from leaking pipelines are known to destroy aquatic

Table 1 Some cases of oil pipeline vandalisation and associated fire disaster in Nigeria, 1998–2006

S/NO	Date	Location	State	Death toll	Observed consequences
1	17 October 1998	Jesse	Delta	At least 1 000	Damage to farmlands, environmental pollution, dozens of people injured
2	22 April 1999	Bayana, Ijaw Community	Delta	At least 10	Damage to farmlands, pollution (air and water)
3	8 June 1999	Akute Odo	Ogun	At least 15	Damage to farmland (land and air pollution)
4	13 October 1999	Ekakpamre, Ughelli	Delta	Undetermined	Damage to farmland, destruction of flora and fauna, environmental pollution
5	14 January 2000	Gana Community	Delta	At least 12	Damage to farmlands and the environment
6	7 February 2000	Ogwe Community	Abia	At least 15	Damage to farmlands and the environment
7	20 February 2000	Lagos	Lagos	At least 3	Damage to farmlands, destruction of a canoe, environmental pollution
8	14 March 2000	Umugbede Community	Abia	At least 50	Environmental pollution, damage to farmlands
9	22 April 2000	Uzo-Uwani	Enugu	At least 6	Damage to farmlands, environmental pollution
10	3 June 2000	Adeje	Delta	Undetermined	Damage to forest, destruction of a high-tension power cable of two electricity plants, youths/police clash
11	20 June 2000	Okuedjeba	Delta	Undetermined	Damage to farmlands, environmental pollution
12	10 July 2000	Adeje/Egborode, Okpe	Delta	At least 150	Damage to farmlands, environmental pollution
13	10 July 2000	Oviri Court	Delta	At least 300	Damage to farmlands, environmental pollution, dozens of people injured
14	5 November 2001	Umudike	Imo	At least 3	Several burnt bicycles, more than 17 people injured
15	19 June 2003	Onitcha Amiyi – Uhu	Abia	At least 125	Dozens of people injured, damage to farmland
16	6 January 2004	Elikpokwodu	Rivers	Undetermined	About 200 hectares of farmland and properties worth millions of Naira destroyed
17	30 July 2004	Aghani	Enugu	At least 7	Several people injured, environmental pollution
18	16 September 2004	Ijegun	Lagos	At least 60	Air and water pollution
19	December 2004	Imore Village	Lagos	At least 500	Environmental pollution
20	30 May 2005	Akinfo	Oyo	At least 1	34 persons were injured, 15 died after eleven days
21	13 January 2006	Iyeke	Edo	At least 7	Six persons injured, damage to farmland, environmental pollution
22	12 May 2006	Ilado Village	Lagos	At least 150	Pollution of water, incineration of everything within a 20 metre radius, dozens of people injured
23	2 December 2006	Ijeododo	Lagos	At least 1	Environmental pollution, damage to farmland.
24	26 December 2006	Abule Egba	Lagos	At least 500	Incineration of 40 vehicles, a dozen homes including a mosque and two churches, and innumerable business ventures comprising auto mechanic workshops, a saw mill and network of timber shops

Source: Compiled by the researcher from various newspaper reports.

life, crops and farmlands and pollute water formations and streams. Both at individual and community level, pipeline vandalisation seriously disorganises economic and social activities. As a result of inferno, residents lose not only their source of income, but also their dietary balance and sources of drinking water. Important economic crops such as palm trees, rubber, cocoa, plantain, and coffee are usually destroyed during fire disaster caused by vandalised pipelines. Also, contaminated marine animals such as fish, periwinkles, crayfish and polluted water can cause serious health problems for human beings when consumed. Thus, by destroying the ecological balance that sustains life, pipeline vandalisation threatens the life-support system that sustains human security and exacerbates the level of poverty of the poor.

More so, vandalisation-induced destruction of properties adds another dimension to human insecurity. For instance, the fire incident on 26 December 2006, in Ebule Egba community in Lagos State, consumed about 40 vehicles, a dozen homes, including a mosque and two churches, as well as innumerable business ventures. The explosion affected the power supply in the area (Nnabuife et al 2006:1). In the case of Oviri Court, the communities lost over US$500 million worth of property in addition to environmental pollution and the death of more than 300 people. These fire outbreaks usually lead to economic dislocation of the local residents and further compound economic hardship, making them more vulnerable in the society.

Furthermore, pipeline disasters have negatively affected the security and wellbeing of many individuals and families. Through bereavement and internal displacement, pipeline explosions lead to deep fracturing of family structures. Consequent to the death of many parents in these disasters, children were left without parents and husbands without wives, or vice versa.[5] Even among survivors of the pipeline inferno, many victims suffered several degrees of burns and damage to internal organs as the result of the inhalation of fumes and poisonous gas, thus making them liabilities to their family. Indeed, for every death or injury caused by pipeline explosion, there are many who must cope with the psychological, physical and economic aftermath. In this context, the poor are hardest hit.

Government response to pipeline explosions

Since the first major pipeline fire disaster in October 1998, pipeline explosions have become a disturbing source of physical and permanent injuries, internal displacement, environmental degradation, destruction of means of livelihoods, and loss of lives. However, it is somehow curious that the government has failed to adopt an effective disaster prevention and management strategy to contain and mitigate the impacts of these disasters on the citizen. The reason may not be far-fetched. It derives essentially from the warped understanding of how poverty is implicated in pipeline vandalisation and the

Figure 1 Integrated disaster management framework for pipeline explosion
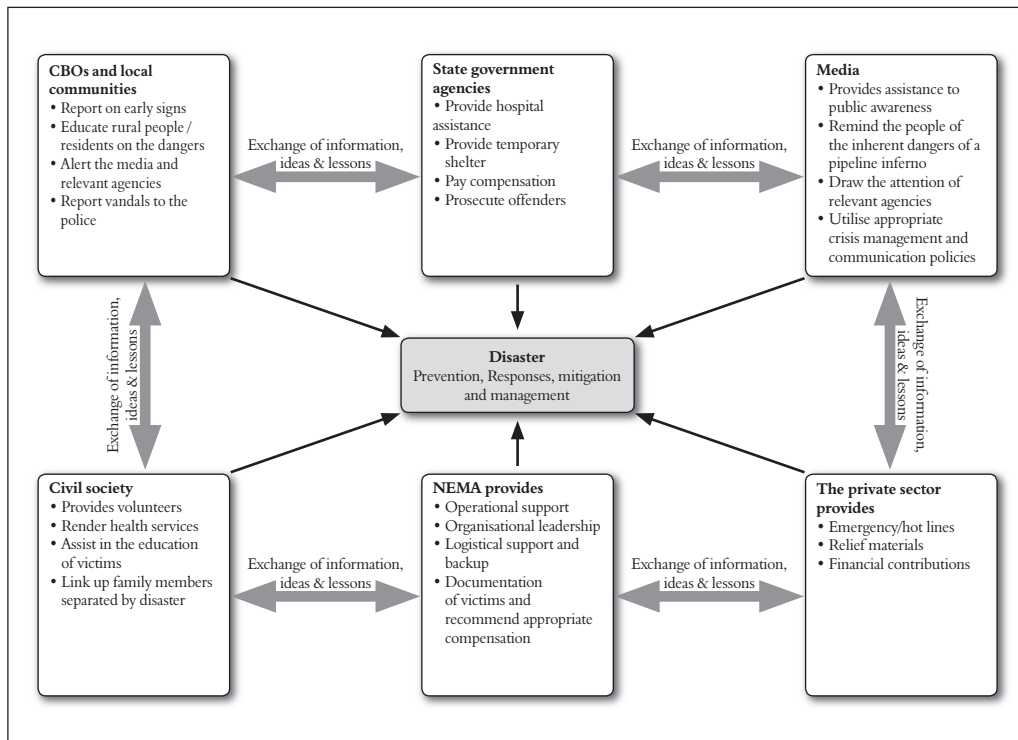
associated inferno. It is this prevalent situation that not only accounts for the ubiquity of pipeline vandalisation but explains why government has failed to pay compensation or evolve proactive disaster prevention and response strategies to contain these incidences which seriously threaten human security.

Consequently, official response to situations of pipeline explosion has largely included accusations of greed on the part of the poor, belated responses to reports of leaking or vandalised pipes, arrests of helpless villagers who may not be the vandals, but who were scooping oil from the burst pipes, non-payment of compensation to victims and the virtual absence of an effective disaster prevention and management framework. One major impact of this weak response is the exacerbation of poverty among the poor and the vulnerable that have been injured, bereaved, forcefully uprooted, or deprived of their means of livelihood.

Hence, with oil pipeline disasters occurring more or less frequently, there is the need for government to begin to design and implement measures that will not only protect human lives and properties, but also cushion the harsh effects of oil pipeline explosions. This paper therefore advocates for the adoption of an integrated disaster management framework that entails a synergic collaboration involving the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), the private sector, the media, civil society and community-based organisations,

and governments (state and local) as part of the government's poverty reduction strategy. Such disaster management will emphasise prevention-oriented and proactive strategies, and the common thread that will run through the system will be consistent exchange of information, ideas and lessons among the stakeholders.

As can be seen in the figure above, such a proactive and integrated disaster management framework will ensure effective participation and utilisation of the capabilities and unique advantages of the identified actors to achieve a robust system aimed at responding to key early warning signs, ensuring effective risk-reduction measures and developing appropriate disaster mitigation and response strategies. Based on this framework, while the community-based organisations (CBOs) and local governments will provide the public awareness and education services; the media will anchor the communication and information management aspects; the state government will provide hospital and accommodation services as well as compensation to victims; the civil society will undertake the first-aid, evacuation and distributive services; the private sector will assist with the material and relief support; and NEMA will provide the organisational, operational and logistic platform.

In this sense, more sustainable and proactive disaster management approaches will be developed which will enhance not only effective utilisation of the unique capabilities of the various stakeholders and ensure that they do not work at cross purposes, but also human security by reducing the vulnerability of citizens to oil pipeline explosions. This will reduce the rate at which ordinary citizens of the country slide into the expansive well of poverty and provide safety nets to the majority of the people who suffer the effects of oil pipeline explosion, whether engendered by natural rupture as a result of wear and tear or by the activities of vandals.

Conclusion

While not rejecting the assumption that poverty has a role to play in terms of the incidence of pipeline vandalisation in Nigeria, this paper has placed the issue of poverty in the proper context vis-à-vis pipeline vandalisation and human security by demonstrating how the usual official refrain to attribute vandalisation-induced fire disaster to poverty conceals more than it reveals. Having laid bare these misconceptions, it advocated the adoption of an integrated disaster management framework as part of government's efforts to reduce poverty in the country and enhance the security of its citizens.

Notes

1   <http//www.accessmylibrary.com,comsite5/bin/pdinventory.pl?pdlanding=1&rederid=2930&purchase_type=ITM&item_id=0286-1365355>.

2   <http:www.africanconservation.org/dcforum/DCForumID29/11.html>.
3   <http://www.wsws.org/news/1998/oct1998/nig-o21.shtml>.
4   <http://www.amanaonline.com/art_pipeline.htm>.
5   <http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/oaricles/oil.htm>.

Bibliography

Abubakar, Shehu 2006. Pipeline vandalization caused fuel shortages at northern depots. *Weekly Trust* (Abuja), 7–13 October

Adeniyi, Olusegun 2007. Playing with fire (1). *Thisday* (Lagos), 18 January.

Ahmed, Ozma S 2007. Nigeria, oil terrorism and pipeline safety [online]. Available at <http//www. accessmylibrary.com,comsite5/bin/pdinventory.pl?pdlanding=1&rederid=2930&purchase_ type=ITM&item_id=0286-1365355> [accessed 23 October 2006].

Akintola, Tope 2006. Pipeline vandalization and oil scooping in the Niger Delta and Others [online]. Available at <http:www.africanconservation.org/dcforum/DCForumID29/11.html> [accessed 21 October 2006].

Ali, Ahmed 2006. Pipeline sabotage in Nigeria and oil pollution damage out of context [online]. Available at <http://www.amanaonline.com/art_pipeline.htm> [accessed 21 October 2006].

Alimeka, C 2001. Poverty, social exclusion and social dislocation in Nigeria. Paper presented at the National Conference on Law and Poverty in Nigeria, Kaduna.

Amanze-Nwachukwu, Chika 2007. Boxing Day tragedy: it is time for solution. *Thisday* (Lagos), 2 January.

Amanze-Nwachukwu, Chika and Ogbu, Ahamefule 2007. Kupolokun cries over pipeline vandalisation. *Thisday* (Lagos), 15 January.

Bassey, Nnimmo, quoted in Enogholase, Gabriel 2007. Environmentalist tasks FG on oil pipeline vandalization. *Vanguard* (Lagos), 3 January.

Brume, Fred 2006. Oil pipeline vandalization in the Niger Delta: the way out [online]. Available at <http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/oaricles/oil.htm> [accessed 21 October 2006].

Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. Lagos: Federal Government Press.

Hartmann, H Frederick 1983. *The relations of nations.* New York: Macmillan.

Hubert, Don 2001. Human security: safety for people in a changing world. In R A Akindele and B E Ate (eds), *Beyond conflict resolution: managing African security in the 21st century.* Ibadan: Vantage Publishers.

Nelles, Wayne 2003. Introduction. In Wayne Nelles (ed), *Comparative education, terrorism and human security: from critical pedagogy to peace building.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nnabuife, Chukka, Ogunbunmi, Kayode and Ebosele, Yetunde 2006. Hundreds die in Lagos pipeline fire. *Guardian* (Lagos), 27 December.

Nsirimovu Anyakwee 2005. Report of a study on small arms and light weapon (SALW) proliferation in Rivers State. In Okechukwu Ibeanu and Fatima K Mohammed (eds), *Oiling violence: the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta.* Lagos: Frankard Publishers.

Phil-Eze, P O 2004. Pipeline vandalization in Nigeria: an ethnic dimension of environmental politics. In Jonah Onuoha and Pat U Okpoko (eds), *Ethnic nationalism and democratic consolidation: perspectives from Nigeria and United States of America.* Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers.

Special Committee on the Review of Petroleum Product Supply and Distribution 2000. *Report.* Abuja.

Thisday 2007. Editorial. *Thisday* (Lagos), 2 January.

Thomas, Caroline 1999. Introduction. In C Thomas and P Wilkin (eds), *Globalisation, human security and the African experience.* London: Lynne Rienner.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1994. *Human Development Report 1994.* New York: Oxford University Press.

White, Jerry 1998. Who is responsible for the oil explosion in Nigeria (October 1998) [online]. Available at <http://www.wsws.org/news/1998/oct1998/nig-o21.shtml> [accessed 21 October 2006].