

# Maritime Security: Challenges of Oil Theft and Pipeline Vandalization in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Oil theft and pipeline vandalization continue to pose a severe threat to Nigeria's economic development, Environmental Sustainability and National Security. This paper examines the existing legal framework in addressing the challenges of oil theft and pipeline vandalization. The paper examines the implications of oil theft on National revenue and huge revenue losses, environmental degradation, social instability and complex legal issues involved. The paper provides insights into the challenges in addressing the nature of oil theft, causes, implications and effectiveness or otherwise of the existing legal framework. The paper employed a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, case studies and legal instruments in oil and gas legislation. Additionally, it identifies major constraints in achieving just and sustainable resolution. The paper recommends the need for strategic planning and collective action towards mitigating the effects of oil theft and pipeline vandalization.

**Keywords:** Surveillance, Oil theft, Niger Delta, Pipeline Vandalization, Maritime, Corruption.

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer and a substantial portion of oil is transported via maritime routes. The oil and gas infrastructure in the Niger-Delta is a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy, accounting for over 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings and a significant portion of government revenue.<sup>1</sup> Pipelines, flow stations, terminals, and offshore facilities are essential for the extraction, transportation, and processing of crude oil and natural gas. However, these assets are highly vulnerable to attacks, particularly from vandals, militants, and criminal networks seeking to exploit weak security measures for economic gain.<sup>2</sup> The destruction of pipelines and illegal tapping of oil not only leads to massive financial losses but also causes environmental degradation, disrupts production, and undermines investor confidence. The strategic importance of these facilities necessitates robust security measures to protect national interests and ensure the continuity of operation.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond their economic significance, oil and gas infrastructures are critical to the social and developmental aspirations of the Niger-Delta region.<sup>4</sup> Revenues from oil production fund infrastructure development, social services, and poverty alleviation programs. Any disruption in the flow of oil or gas due to vandalism or theft has direct consequences on the socio-economic well-being of communities in the region.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, persistent insecurity in the oil sector contributes to the proliferation of violent groups, militancy, and community unrest, creating a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and instability. Protecting these infrastructures is therefore not only an economic imperative but also a social and developmental necessity.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, located in the southern part of the country, is the nation's primary oil and

<sup>1</sup> J. F. Ikechi & C. O. Onyinyechi, 'Oil Theft, Maritime Insecurity and Economic Loss in the Niger Delta.' *International Journal of Economics and Environmental Security*, (2023) 5(2) 80

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

gas producing area and a critical hub for its maritime economy. Since the discovery of commercial quantities of crude oil in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, in 1956, the Niger Delta has become the backbone of Nigeria's petroleum industry, accounting for over 90 per cent of the country's export earnings and about 80 per cent of government revenue.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its immense contribution to national wealth, the Niger Delta remains one of the most underdeveloped and conflict-prone regions in Nigeria. Decades of oil exploration have been accompanied by environmental degradation, pollution, and widespread poverty, which have fuelled grievances among host communities. These grievances have often manifested in various forms of resistance, including protests, militancy, and sabotage of oil infrastructure, particularly pipelines.<sup>7</sup> Pipeline vandalism and oil theft, often carried out through illegal bunkering and artisanal refining, have become endemic in the region, leading to massive economic losses and ecological damage.<sup>8</sup>

In recent years, these land-based crimes have increasingly taken on a maritime dimension, with armed groups and criminal networks using boats and barges to attack offshore facilities, steal crude oil, and conduct ship-to-ship transfers in Nigeria's territorial waters.<sup>9</sup> The Nigerian Navy, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), and other security agencies have intensified operations such as Operation Delta Safe and the Deep Blue Project to combat these threats, but the problem persists, indicating deep-rooted structural and institutional weaknesses.<sup>10</sup>

### Concept of Energy Security and Critical Infrastructure

Energy security refers to the uninterrupted availability of energy resources at an affordable price. For Nigeria, crude oil and natural gas remain the dominant sources of revenue and foreign exchange, therefore, the protection of oil and gas infrastructure pipelines, flow stations, export terminals, and offshore platforms is critical.<sup>11</sup> Pipeline vandalism and oil theft represent serious energy security threats, as they directly interfere with the production, transportation, and export of crude oil.<sup>12</sup>

### Pipeline Vandalism and Oil Theft

Pipeline vandalism involves deliberate acts of damage or sabotage to oil and gas pipelines, including tampering with valves, installing illegal taps, cutting or blowing up sections of pipeline, and obstructing repairs or access to facilities.<sup>13</sup> In the Niger Delta, oil theft is closely linked to illegal bunkering, where stolen crude is transported by trucks, barges, or small vessels to local artisanal refineries or to larger vessels offshore for export. These practices not only deprive the state of revenue but also fuel wider criminal networks and violence across the region.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Development Programme. (2006). Niger Delta human development report. UNDP. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/nigeriahdrreport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Umar, A. T., & Othman, M. S. H. (2017). Causes and consequences of crude oil pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: A confirmatory factor analysis approach. *Cogent Economics & Finance*, 5(1), 1353199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2017.1353199>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Adesina, O. A. (2021). Maritime security challenge in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. *European Journal of Security and International Affairs*, 1(1), 1-20

<sup>10</sup> Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency. (2021). Nigeria's Deep Blue Project and the fight against maritime crime. NIMASA.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Niger Delta Human Development Report (UNDP 2006) 28.

<sup>12</sup> Umar, A. T., & Othman, M. S. H. (2017). Causes and consequences of crude oil pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: A confirmatory factor analysis approach. *Cogent Economics & Finance*, 5(1), 1353199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2017.1353199>

<sup>13</sup> Dan-Woniwei, F. D., Nwokolo, E., & Paki, F. A. E. (2024). Crude oil theft, illegal bunkering and pipeline vandalism in Nigeria's Niger Delta: Effects and national responses to curb the menace: Introduction, methods and materials, conceptual and literature review, effects of crude oil theft, among others. *Journal of Global Social Sciences*, 5(19), 69-84.

<sup>14</sup> W.A. Balogun and O.P Adesanya, "A sea of Troubles" oil Theft, and Economy and the Business of Organised Energy Crime in the Gulf of Guinea (2022) 14(1&2) *African Journal of Stability and Development*. 15.

## Patterns and Drivers of Pipeline Vandalisation and Oil Theft in the Niger Delta

Several recurring patterns and drivers of pipeline vandalisation and oil theft are; First, socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and perceived marginalisation<sup>15</sup>. Many host communities feel that despite the wealth generated from their lands and waters, they receive little in terms of development, employment, or compensation for environmental damage.

Second, political and governance factors play a major role. Weak state presence in remote communities, corruption among public officials and security personnel, and inadequate regulation of the oil sector create opportunities for organised criminal groups.<sup>16</sup> There are persistent allegations that some political and business elites benefit from oil theft networks, providing protection or capital in exchange for profits, which complicates enforcement and undermines public trust in government interventions.<sup>17</sup>

Third, the physical and technical characteristics of Nigeria's pipeline network contribute to vulnerability. While local groups have developed increasingly sophisticated methods for tapping pipelines, operating artisanal refineries, and coordinating ship-to-ship transfers with larger vessels offshore.

### Oil Terrorism

Oil terrorism is the latest of the ills plaguing the Nigerian oil industry. It involves such acts as the blowing up of oil pipelines, installations and platforms with explosives; and the seizure of oil barges, oil wells, flow stations, support vessels, and other oil facilities in order to prevent the distribution of crude oil or its refined products.<sup>18</sup> The first act of oil terrorism can be traced to December 2005, when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) blew up Shell's Opobo Pipeline in Delta State.<sup>19</sup>

In September 2005, after the arrest of Alhaji Asari Dokubo,<sup>20</sup> militant groups in the Delta region instructed all multinational oil companies to leave the region. Since then militants in the region, seeking to control a greater share of the nation's oil wealth, have adopted a terrorist strategy. By doing so, to force the government to meet their political, economic, and environmental demands of their people.<sup>21</sup>

### Illegal Oil Bunkering And Pipeline Sabotage: Economic And Environmental Implications

Illegal oil bunkering constitutes one of Nigeria's most significant economic and environmental threats. The Niger Delta home to extensive networks of oil pipelines and flow stations has long been subject to widespread tapping, vandalism, and sabotage.<sup>22</sup> Estimates suggest that Nigeria loses hundreds of thousands of barrels of crude oil daily to illegal bunkering, resulting in billions of dollars in annual revenue losses.<sup>23</sup>

### Social and Security Implications

Pipeline vandalization and oil theft contribute to social instability and insecurity in the Niger Delta. The loss of livelihoods due to pollution and land degradation, combined with feelings of marginalization and injustice, has encouraged some youths to join militant groups or criminal networks that engage in vandalization, illegal bunkering and attacks on security forces and oil workers. Conflicts over control of illegal oil routes and refining sites have sometimes led to violent clashes within communities and between rival groups.

The growth of an illegal economy around stolen oil were powerful actors benefitting from illegal oil revenues,

<sup>15</sup> O. B. Amodu, 'Unearthing the Damage: Oil Pipeline Vandalism's Contribution to Nigeria's Socio-economic Challenges' (2023) 8(1) Top Multidisciplinary Research Journal

<sup>16</sup> Umar and Othman (n7) 6; Balogun and Adesanya (n 10) 20.

<sup>17</sup> Balogun and Adesanya (N 10) 22; Dan-Woniowei, Nwokolo, and Paki (n 8) 78.

<sup>18</sup> A.J. Alawode, and I.O. Ogunleyo, "maintenance, security and environmental implications of pipeline Damage and Raptures in the Niger Delta Region: (2011) 12 PJST 565.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> The leader of the Niger Delta peoples Volunteer Force, who is widely regarded as a leader of the Ijaw nation.

<sup>21</sup> F.C. Onuoha, "Oil Pipeline Sabotage in Nigeria: Dimensions, Actors and Implications for National Security" (2008) 17 ASR 99.

<sup>22</sup> Adeyemi Akinola, 'Fragmentation in Nigeria's Maritime Security Architecture' (2019) 33 Journal of Maritime Law and Policy 112.

<sup>23</sup> Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Oil Theft Report (2022).

undermines the authority of the state and complicates law-enforcement efforts. The involvement of some corrupt officials and security personnel in protecting or profiting from oil-theft operations further erodes public trust and weakens the deterrent effect of anti-vandalization and maritime-security measures.

Decreased oil production due to pipeline vandalization further compounds economic challenges. Sabotage pipelines and damaged flow stations disrupt the continuous supply of crude oil to refineries and export terminals, reducing operational efficiency. These disruptions force oil companies to shut down production facilities.

Additionally, the illicit diversion of crude oil into black markets affects pricing and market stability. The illegal sale of stolen oil not only deprives the government and legitimate oil companies of revenue but also introduces unregulated supply that can distort domestic and international oil prices. The cumulative effect of these losses constrains economic growth, limits investment opportunities, and weakens the country's financial resilience.<sup>24</sup>

Repeated oil spills and pollution also exacerbate climate change concerns by releasing greenhouse gases and other toxic substances into the environment. The release of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other pollutants contributes to air and water pollution, which has health implications for communities and aggravates environmental hazards in the region.<sup>25</sup>

Socially, pipeline vandalization and oil theft create instability within local communities, fueling resentment among local populations. High unemployment rates in the Niger-Delta also exacerbate social challenges. The lack of legitimate job opportunities pushes some youths to participate in illegal oil bunkering or join militant groups, creating a cycle of poverty, crime, and violence.

The presence of militancy discourages investment, slows industrial development, and complicates government efforts to maintain peace and order.<sup>26</sup> Pipeline vandalization and oil theft also heighten the security risks in the Niger-Delta.

Furthermore, the instability caused by oil-related crimes contributes to broader regional insecurity. Criminal activities in the Niger-Delta have transnational implications, as stolen oil and other contraband may be transported across borders, involving regional networks and complicating law enforcement efforts.<sup>27</sup>

### Socio-political Implications:

- **Loss of Lives:** The increasing number of pipeline vandalism incidents in Nigeria has been identified as the worst issue that has affected the country's oil industry. Although it has been reported that over 2,500 people have died due to the explosions caused by the fire from the vandalized pipelines, it is important to note that the exact number of casualties caused by these incidents was not known.<sup>28</sup> Since the incident involving the Jesse pipeline in Delta State in 1998,<sup>29</sup> the number of pipeline explosions that resulted in the deaths of people has reportedly increased significantly. These incidents are more frequent in the oil-producing states, such as Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. In addition to these, the increasing number of pipeline vandalism attacks has also led to death threats being made against government officials and security agents. The sophistication of the vandals has allowed them to carry out their criminal activities with ease. They have also carried out attacks that have led to the deaths of civilians and police officers in an attempt to maintain a safe environment. In 2013, five workers of the

<sup>24</sup> J. F. Ikechi & C. O. Onyinyechi, 'Oil Theft, Maritime Insecurity and Economic Loss in the Niger Delta,' *International Journal of Economics and Environmental Security*, (2023) 5(2) 80.

<sup>25</sup> O. Osman & M. Salifu, 'Effects of Oil Theft on Economic Growth and Security in Sub-Saharan Africa,' *Universal Journal of Economic Development*, (2025) 2(1) 31-41. (Local/regional journal extended).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> S. Ehiane, 'The Emergence of Maritime Piracy in Nigeria and Implications for Security,' *Journal of Law, Security and Society*, (2025) 5(1)45.

<sup>28</sup> Ugwuanyi E. "Steaming Vandalism Theft in Downstream Sector" in A.C. Okoli and S. Orinya, "Oil Pipeline Vandalism and Nigeria's National Security" *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 2013,13

<sup>29</sup> *Supra*

Petroleum Products Marketing Company of Nigeria were killed while they were trying to fix a vandalized pipeline.

- **Loss of Employment:** The activities of oil theft and pipeline vandalism have contributed to the divestment policies of some international oil companies operating in Nigeria. According to a report released by the shell petroleum Development Company of Nigeria,<sup>30</sup> the company decided to stop operating in the country's onshore oil sector due to the various security issues and oil spills that it experienced. This resulted in a reduction in the company's production activities and a loss of jobs.
- **Impediment to social development:** As a result of the various insecurities associated with the Niger Delta region, the government is unable to fully provide for the various social amenities with which the inhabitants of such area requires to live a good life.
- **Internal Population Displacement:** Another social impact of oil theft in the Niger Delta is internal population displacement of the people of the Niger Delta based on clashes between the military and 'criminal armed' groups. The displacement has led many families to migrate from their communities to other riverine oil-producing communities in search of productive fishing grounds or to urban cities across the country.

### Nigeria Legal Framework on Pipeline Vandalisation and Oil Theft

Several Nigerian statutes address pipeline vandalisation and oil theft. The Petroleum Production and Distribution (Anti-Sabotage) Act criminalises acts of willful obstruction or interference with the production, distribution or transportation of petroleum products, and it prescribes severe penalties for those who damage facilities or disrupt operations.<sup>31</sup> The Miscellaneous Offences Act also contains provisions that make it an offence to tamper with oil pipelines or installations, reflecting the seriousness with which the law treats such conduct.<sup>32</sup>

The Oil Pipelines Act sets out the regime for granting licences and rights of way for pipelines, lays down duties concerning the construction and maintenance of pipelines, and provides for compensation where pipelines cause damage to land or interests in land.<sup>33</sup>

At the maritime level, the key legislation is the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act 2019 (SPOMO). The Act domestically implements international conventions and provides a comprehensive definition of piracy and other unlawful acts at sea, covering attacks on ships on the high seas and armed robbery within Nigeria's territorial waters. It grants Nigerian courts jurisdiction over piracy and related offences committed within Nigeria's maritime zones and, in certain cases, outside Nigerian maritime zone, and it sets substantial penalties, including long terms of imprisonment and fines.

Legal commentary emphasises that SPOMO is significant because it closes gaps that previously existed in Nigerian law regarding piracy and gives clear legal bases to prosecute not only those who directly attack ships but also those who facilitate such crimes. Some authors argue, however, that the effectiveness of SPOMO still depends on proper investigation, interpretation and application by law-enforcement agencies and the courts, and on regional cooperation for information-sharing.

### Selected Judicial Authorities

<sup>30</sup> Salau S. "Shell to see more Oil Fields in Nigeria" The Guardian Newspaper Nigeria (28 August 2014) in A.O. Njoku, "Oil Pipelines Vandalism and its Effects on the Socio-Economic Development in Nigerian Society" International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 2016(4):49.

<sup>31</sup> Petroleum Production and Distribution (Anti-Sabotage) Act, Cap P12 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004/

<sup>32</sup> Miscellaneous Offences Act, Cap M17 LFN 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Oil Pipelines Act, Cap 07 LFN 2004.

In the Arepo pipeline vandalism case,<sup>34</sup> the Federal High Court discharged and acquitted ten accused persons charged with pipeline vandalization and murder because the prosecution failed to prove that they were the vandals who attacked engineers working on a Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) pipeline. In *Bodo v Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd*,<sup>35</sup> heard in the High Court of England and Wales applying Nigerian law, Shell accepted liability for major oil spills in Bodo Creek, and the litigation highlighted the duty of pipeline operators to maintain their facilities and clean up pollution.

These examples show that effective maritime security and legal control of pipeline vandalization and oil theft depend not only on strong laws and security operations, but also on careful investigation and consistent judicial enforcement.

It is clear that pipeline vandalization and crude oil theft in the Niger Delta pose serious threats to Nigeria's economy, environment and internal security. Although Nigeria has established legal frameworks and maritime-security measures, the persistence of these crimes and the mixed outcomes of key court cases indicate that enforcement remains a major challenge. This situation justifies a focused study on how maritime security and the judicial process can be strengthened to reduce vandalization and oil theft and to protect the strategic Niger Delta region.

### Legal Instruments Governing Oil Theft In Nigeria

There are various legislation that govern the oil and gas sector in Nigeria which provides the framework for the licencing of oil and gas companies to engage in activities connected with the exploration, production, and transportation of crude oil.<sup>36</sup>

The Nigerian government participates in the oil and gas industry through the Nigerian national petroleum Corporation (NNPC) whose activities include exploration, production, refining, transportation, distribution, and supply of oil and gas products.

### Constitutional Provisions on Oil Theft

#### Section 44(3) of the Constitution

Section 44(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) vests the entire property in and control of all minerals, mineral oils and natural gas in, under or upon any land in Nigeria or in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria in the Government of the Federation.<sup>37</sup> This constitutional provision centralizes ownership and regulatory control in the federal government, effectively excluding state and local governments from making independent decisions regarding natural resources within their territories.

The centralization has had dual effects. On one hand, it facilitates uniformity in oil resource management. On the other, it has bred resentment in oil-producing coastal communities who perceive this provision as enabling exploitation without compensation.<sup>38</sup> Oil-producing communities are often excluded from participating in the management or sharing of oil revenues, thereby fuelling unrest and in some cases, justifying oil theft as a form of economic resistance.<sup>39</sup>

### The Petroleum Act 1969

<sup>34</sup> Court discharges, acquits 10 accused after 3-year trial' *The Guardian* (Lagos, 29 November 2015) (Arepo pipelines vandalism case)

<sup>35</sup> *Bodo v Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd* EWHC (TCC); Business & Human Rights Resources Centre, 'Shell lawsuit (re oil spills & Bodo community in Nigeria)'

<sup>36</sup> Justina Mboho, "Laws that Regulate Nigeria's Troubled Oil and Gas sectors," Naira Metrics, accessed march 31, 2023, <https://nairametrics.com/2022/09/17laws-that-regulate-nigerias-troubled-oil-and-gas-sectors/>.

<sup>37</sup> Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s 44(3).

<sup>38</sup> S. Amadi, *Resource Control and Environmental Justice in Nigeria* (2018) 5(1) NAELR 31.

<sup>39</sup> T. Okonta and O. Douglas, *Where Vultures feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil* (Verso 2003).

The Petroleum Act 1969 is the first legislation that regulates the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. It provides the framework for the licensing of oil and gas companies to engage in activities connected with the exploration, production and transportation of crude oil. Section 2(1) of the Act provides that only citizens or companies incorporated in Nigeria can validly partake in the oil and gas industry for activities such as oil exploration, drilling, storage, production refining, and transportation of the oil and gas, the same section also provides for the powers of the minister of Petroleum Resources and empowers the minister to grant and revoke licenses.

**Section 9** of the Act also empowers the minister to establish subsidiary regulations for the oil and gas sector.

According to the Petroleum Act, the Minister has the regulatory powers and responsibility of granting rights for the exploration, extraction, and production of oil and gas in Nigeria through the various types of Licenses.

The two major types of licenses issued by the Minister of Petroleum Resources include;

- The Oil Prospecting License (OPL), and
- The Marginal Field License and the Oil Mining License (OML).

**Section 25 to 26** of the Act provides for the procedure for the revocation of oil licenses by the minister.

### **The Petroleum Industry Act 2021 (PIA)**

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), enacted in August 2021, represents the most ambitious reform of Nigeria's oil sector in decades. The Act repeals the previous statutes including the Petroleum Act of 1969, and establishes new institutions such as the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority.

#### **(i) Host Community Development Trusts**

One of the most innovative provisions in the PIA is the establishment of Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs) under Part V of the Act. These trusts are to be funded by oil companies with 3% of their actual annual operating expenditure, aimed at fostering peace and development in host communities.<sup>40</sup>

While HCDTs represent a step toward restorative environmental justice, they have been criticised for giving oil companies undue control over the structure and operations of the trusts, rather than empowering communities' directly.<sup>41</sup>

#### **(iii) Environmental Obligations**

The PIA also imposes obligations on oil companies to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), submit environmental management plans, and comply with decommissioning and abandonment procedures.<sup>42</sup> Sections 104 and 235 of the Act prescribe penalties for failure to remediate degraded lands or respond to spills.

However, enforcement of these provisions remains weak due to overlapping jurisdiction with NOSDRA and NESREA.

### **(4) Environmental Impact Assessment Act (Cap E12 LFN 2004)**

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act requires that any activity likely to significantly affect the environment including oil drilling or pipeline construction must undergo an EIA.<sup>43</sup> The Act mandates a process that includes public consultation, scoping, report submission, and environmental clearance before a project can proceed.

<sup>40</sup> Petroleum Industry Act 2021, s 240.

<sup>41</sup> M. Ebeku, 'Host Community Trusts under the PIA 2021' (2022) 6(1) Journal of Energy Law 89.

<sup>42</sup> Petroleum Industry Act 2021, ss 104, 235.

<sup>43</sup> Environmental Impact Assessment Act, Cap E12 LFN 2004, s 2.

However, in practice, EIAs are often treated as formalities. Reports are frequently prepared post-facto, and the public consultation process is either ignored or manipulated. Regulatory agencies have also been accused of rubber-stamping EIAs without adequate technical scrutiny.<sup>44</sup>

The courts have occasionally stepped in to invalidate defective EIAs. In *Oronto Douglas v Shell Petroleum Development Company*, the court ruled that Shell's failure to conduct an EIA before commencing a project rendered it unlawful.<sup>45</sup>

### **(5) NOSDRA Act (2006)**

The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) was established by Act No. 15 of 2006 to detect, manage, and mitigate oil spills across the country. NOSDRA's statutory responsibilities include:

- Coordinating oil spill preparedness and response.
- Monitoring oil spill contingency plans.
- Imposing administrative fines and penalties.
- Collaborating with international response agencies.

Section 6 of the NOSDRA Act empowers the agency to respond to oil spills without delay, while Section 11 imposes duties on oil operators to report and contain spills immediately.

Despite these provisions, NOSDRA suffers from poor funding, technical incapacity, and a lack of political independence. In *NOSDRA v Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited*, the Federal High Court quashed a fine imposed by NOSDRA, holding that the agency lacked jurisdiction to impose punitive damages without a court order.<sup>46</sup> The case exposed the fragility of the agency's enforcement powers and raised constitutional concerns about separation of powers.

### **(6) NESREA Act (2007)**

The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency Act 2007 established NESREA to enforce environmental laws, regulations, and standards. Its mandate overlaps with that of NOSDRA in some respects, particularly regarding:

- Environmental compliance monitoring
- Industrial pollution control
- Waste management
- Biodiversity protection

The regulatory turf war between NESREA and NOSDRA has led to confusion and enforcement paralysis. For instance, while NOSDRA deals with oil spills, NESREA regulates industrial effluents yet oil operations often involve both.<sup>47</sup>

### **(7) Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC):**

This is a paramilitary agency of the federal government Security and Civil Defence Corps Act No. 2, 2003 (NSCDC Act 2003). The NSCDC Act 2003 has been amended by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence

<sup>44</sup> O. Adekoya, 'The Flawed Practice of EIAs in Nigeria' (2021) 9(3) Environmental Law Digest 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Oronto Douglas v Shell Petroleum Development Company* (1999) 2 NWLR (Pt 591) 466.

<sup>46</sup> *Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited v NOSDRA* (Unreported, FHC/L/CS/1571/2012).

<sup>47</sup> O. Oko, 'Institutional Conflicts in Nigeria's Environmental Regulation' (2020) 18(2) NAELR 55.

Corps (Amendment) Act No. 6, 2007 (NSCDC (Amendment) Act 2007). The Act gives the NSCDC the power to arrest with or without warrant, detain, investigate and institute legal proceedings in the name of the Attorney General of the Federation against any person suspected to have committed an offence under the Act or involved in oil pipeline vandalism. The interpretation of this power given to the NSCDC is that it is the agency's responsibility to prosecute a suspect involved in oil pipeline vandalism and not any other agency such as the Nigeria Police Force.

#### **(8) Criminal Code Act Cap. C38 L.F.N. 2004.**

There are no specific provisions in the criminal code Act which deals with oil theft in particular, however there are provisions on the attendant pollution that comes with pipeline vandalism and oil theft. Section 245 of the Act provides: 'any person who corrupts or fouls the water of any spring, stream, well, tank, reservoir or place so as to make it less fit for the purpose for which it is ordinarily used, is guilty of misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for six months. But, given the effects of environmental degradation, this punishment is insufficient.

#### **(9) Miscellaneous Offences Act Cap.M17 L.F.N. 2004:**

Section 1(7)(a) of this Act prohibits the willful or malicious breakage, damage, disconnection or tampering with any pipe or pipeline for the transportation of crude oil or refined oil and gas. Section 1 (7) (b) also prohibits the obstruction, tampering or interference with the free flow of any crude oil or refined petroleum product. The prescribed punishment for the contravention of this Act is Life imprisonment.<sup>48</sup>

#### **(10) Petroleum Products and Distribution (Anti-Sabotage) Act CAP P12 LFN 2004**

This Act makes the willful obstruction or prevention of petroleum production and distribution an offence in Nigeria. Section 1 of this Act prohibits sabotage i.e. the willful act of destroying, damaging, or obstructing petroleum installations and transportation infrastructure, thereby hindering petroleum production and distribution processes.

#### **(11) The Criminal Justice Act (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act C39 L.F.N. 2004:**

This Act was enacted to provide for stiffer penalties for damages to telecommunication works, electricity transmission lines and oil pipelines. This Act specifically prohibits the willful and unlawful destruction, damage or removal of any oil pipeline or connected installation and the prevention or obstruction of the flow of oil along any pipeline or interference with any connected installation, found guilty of destroying, damaging or removing an oil pipeline installation shall be liable to:

- (a) A fine of two times the value of the oil pipeline or installation which might have been destroyed, damaged or removed;
- (b) A fine of two times the value of any oil that might have escaped as a result of the damage, destruction or removal;
- (c) A fine of N2.000 whichever is higher;
- (d) A ten year imprisonment term or both fine and imprisonment. Also, when a person is found guilty of preventing or obstructing the flow of oil along any pipeline or interfering with any connected installation, he shall be liable, upon conviction, to a fine of N500 or a three year imprisonment term or both the fine and the term of imprisonment.

The Federal Government also announced the introduction of two key regulations put together to halt the massive oil theft in the Niger Delta and boost the country's revenue from crude oil production: The Upstream Petroleum Measurement Regulations, and Advance Cargo Declaration Regulation. These regulations were

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<sup>48</sup> Section 1(7)(b) Miscellaneous Offences Act.

specifically drafted to tackle oil theft.<sup>49</sup>

## (12) Measures Put in Place By Oil Companies:

Oil companies in a bid to prevent loss occasioned by oil theft to their business have put in efforts to tackle the incidence of oil theft during the exploration and production of petroleum. These measures include:

- (i) The installation of devices called Surface Controlled Subsurface Safety Valves (ScSSV) to oil wells, this would cause the well to trip and shut down when oil is being bunkered. Also installation of Surface Safety Valve (SSV) on the flow line near the wellhead will cause the flow line to trip when it is being vandalised. These valves work to prevent pollution and crude oil theft, because it requires special technical training to operate them. However the thieves have acquired the skills to operate the valves.
- (ii) Development of host communities to combat restiveness of members of the community to curtail crude oil stealing by the provision of amenities such as roads, electricity, town halls and so on.

## Efficacy of the Legal Framework for Oil Theft in Nigeria

One major defect in our criminal justice system which has served as a veritable incentive to crude oil theft in Nigeria over the years is the failure of sanctions or the insufficiency thereof, for example section 1 of the Petroleum Products and Distribution (Anti-Sabotage) Act of 1975 outlaws sabotage, i.e. the willful act of destroying, damaging, or obstructing petroleum installations and transportation infrastructure, thereby hindering petroleum production and distribution processes.<sup>50</sup> This Act makes the willful obstruction or prevention of petroleum production and distribution an offence in Nigeria.<sup>51</sup>

The Act criminalizes all acts that disrupt petroleum production and distribution such as pipe vandalism, blow-ups, obstruction of petroleum production or distribution; obstruction of the procurement of petroleum products; or the obstruction of vehicles distributing petroleum products such as motor spirits, gas oil, diesel oil, automotive gas oil, fuel oil, aviation fuel, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gases and any lubricating oil or greases or other lubricant.<sup>52</sup> Under this Act, the offence of sabotage is punishable by a death penalty or imprisonment not exceeding 21 years.<sup>53</sup> This Act seeks to punish the principal offender, as well as anyone who aids, incites, counsels or procures any other person, to commit an act of sabotage, whether or not that other person actually does the act in question or not. Although the blow-up and vandalization of petroleum distribution pipelines, a principal cause of oil spillage in the Niger Delta, has been outlawed by this Act, only a few arrests and prosecutions have ever been carried out under this law. Lack of committed enforcement of this anti-sabotage legislation has resulted in a culture of impunity in the Niger Delta region.<sup>54</sup>

Another problem is that there is no single comprehensive, specific law dealing with oil pipeline security in Nigeria. An examination of Nigerian legal framework on pipelines laws reveals that they only have provisions that relate to the general management of oil pipelines and those provisions that give limited roles to organizations such as the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to secure oil pipelines. Although relevant laws exist that relate to the general management of oil pipelines, none of them comprehensively addresses the key causes of, and provide solutions to, the problem of pipeline insecurity in Nigeria.

For instance, while sabotage is addressed in existing laws, none of the laws addresses other causes of pipeline insecurity such as negligent construction, accidental ruptures, oil terrorism and illegal bunkering. Considering the critical roles that oil pipelines play in Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, and in the oil and gas industry, there should be a separate law that deals solely with the all-important issue of pipeline security in the country.

<sup>49</sup> Punch, FG Regulation to Curb Oil theft <https://punchng.com/fg-unveils-new-regulations-to-curb-oil-theft/>>amp.

<sup>50</sup> Petroleum Products and Distribution (Anti-Sabotage) Act of 1975, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, p. 12

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> F.C. Onuoha, "Oil Pipeline Sabotage in Nigeria: Dimensions, Actors and Implications for National Security" (2008) 17 ASR 99.

In maintaining societal equilibrium and ensuring obedience of laws and respect for order, sanction is therefore an imperative. Unfortunately, the caliber of sanctions available against oil theft in Nigeria and its applicability have left much to be desired. For instance, it was reported and published in the online media on January 20, 2022, that some crude oil thieves and their vessel caught with 4,000 metric tons of crude oil valued at 200 million naira had, through the instrumentality of a plea bargain, been allowed to walk virtually free with a fine of N2,000.<sup>55</sup> In a judgement delivered on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2021, the trial Judge Hon. Justice O.E Abang noted that the plea bargain filed by the prosecutor Onyeka Ohakwe (an officer in the Federal Ministry of Justice) was “dirty”, “sordid” and “unpleasant”. The Judge also opined that he was seeing for the first time where a charge was amended to give the defendant “a soft landing” and that the amendment was not done in public interest.

The punishment of life imprisonment and the forfeiture of vessel in connection therewith to the federal government upon conviction for the offence of dealing in petroleum products without lawful authority provided in section 1(17) of the Miscellaneous Offences Act 2004; and the punishment of three years imprisonment for the offence of stealing property of the federal government of Nigeria provided under section 390 of the Criminal Code Act Cap C38 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, were grossly watered down in the case through the amendment and plea bargain agreement to the punishment of a fine “not exceeding N2,000” prescribed in section 13(2)(b)(IV) of the Petroleum Act CAP 10 Laws of the Federation 2004 and N 5million fine on the vessel.

Evidently, the major players in this serious economic crime include the high and mighty in the society who have appropriated for themselves and their generations-the right to use and gratify themselves. In any society where this happens where a privileged few have a sense of entitlement to the commonwealth and flagrantly, shamelessly, fearlessly and unapologetically display it as happening in Nigeria, genuine growth and development are impossible.

Furthermore, the shortcoming with regards to some of the legislation discussed above is that the provisions relating to the enforcement organs under the various laws show significant overlap of functions between the different organs set up by the different laws for the same type of offence. For example, Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Act, Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous provisions) Act and Petroleum Production and Distribution (Anti-sabotage) Act, the punishment prescribed by the three Acts are separate and distinct from each other, it depends on which of the laws the accused is charged. There is therefore no uniformity in terms of punishment in respect of the offence of sabotage or oil theft.

Despite the plethora of laws, enforcement remains weak due to systemic corruption, poor investigation, and political interference.

### **Other Challenges of Enforcement are Summarised below;**

- **Weak Prosecution:** Most oil theft cases end in acquittals or are abandoned due to lack of evidence or poor case management.<sup>56</sup>
- **Complicity of enforcement agents:** Security operatives tasked with protecting pipelines are often implicated in facilitating the theft themselves.
- **Jurisdictional ambiguity:** Disputes between federal and state authorities sometimes delay response and prosecution, particularly in resource-producing states.
- **Lengthy judicial process:** Nigerian courts are often overwhelmed, underfunded, and susceptible to corruption, making legal redress slow and unreliable.
- **Limited forensic and surveillance capabilities:** Law enforcement lacks the technology to track,

<sup>55</sup> Ade Adesomoju, “‘Dirty’ Plea Bargain: How oil thieves caught with N200 million product got away with N2,000 fine - Court,” Premium Times, accessed on March 31, 2023, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/506640-dirty-plea-bargain-how-oil-thieves-caught-with-n200million-product-got-away-with-n2000-fine-court.html?tztc=l>.

<sup>56</sup> EFCC Case Files Review (2019-2023), Transparency International Nigeria.

investigate, and prosecute crimes involving stolen oil, especially when it involves transnational actors.

### **Recent Legal Reforms**

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), passed in 2021, seeks to restructure the oil industry by creating regulatory clarity, ensuring host community development, and promoting transparency. The PIA introduces Host communities Development Trust Funds, which aim to give oil producing communities as stake in protecting oil infrastructure.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, mobile courts have been proposed in the Niger Delta to expedite oil theft trials, though these have not yet been fully implemented.<sup>58</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Securing Nigeria's maritime domain against oil theft, pipeline vandalization and illegal bunkering is a national imperative. Despite existing laws and institutions, enforcement remains inconsistent, convictions are rare, and the marine environment continue to suffer. The findings reveal a deeply entrenched system of illicit activity sustained by elite complicity, weak institutions, and community disenfranchisement.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

### **Strengthen Maritime Security Capacity**

Maritime-security agencies such as the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA and NSCDC should be better equipped with patrol boats, surveillance systems, communications equipment and adequate logistics to maintain regular patrols in creeks and coastal waters. Government should ensure stable funding and maintenance so that equipment remains functional and operations are not hampered by lack of fuel or repairs.

### **Improve Inter-Agency Coordination and Intelligence Sharing**

There should be stronger coordination among the Navy, NIMASA, NSCDC, the police and other security agencies through joint task forces, shared command centres and regular information-sharing on suspected oil-theft routes and actors. This will help to close gaps that criminals exploit between agencies and to build stronger cases for prosecution.

### **Enhance Investigation and Prosecution of Vandalization and Oil-Theft Cases**

Specialised investigative units and prosecutors should be trained and resourced to handle pipeline vandalization and oil-theft cases, including proper evidence gathering, documentation of crime scenes and handling of seized vessels and products. Lessons from successful SPOMO prosecutions should be applied to sabotage and oil-theft cases to avoid outcomes like the failed Arepo prosecution.

### **Promote Community Engagement and Alternative Livelihoods**

Government and oil companies should work more closely with host communities to provide employment opportunities, skills training and social services that reduce the attraction of illegal oil activities for youths. Community-based surveillance and early-warning systems, with clear benefits for communities that help protect pipelines, can also improve local cooperation with security agencies.

### **Ensure Corporate Responsibility and Prompt Environmental Remediation**

Oil companies should strengthen pipeline monitoring, maintenance and rapid response to leaks and vandalization, in line with their obligations under the Oil Pipelines Act Prompt clean-up and fair compensation after spills can reduce community anger and the likelihood that people will resort to vandalization to press their grievances.

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<sup>57</sup> Petroleum Miscellaneous Offences Act Cap M17 LFN 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Policy Brief, 2023.

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## **Enforcement of Law, Accountability and Justice**

Oil theft results in multi-billion dollar revenue losses annually without enforcement of laws on oil theft and pipeline vandalization laws become symbolic. Regulatory and judicial enforcement upholds the credibility and affirms the authority of the state. Enforcement protect the integrity of Nigeria's petroleum sector by curbing oil theft. Enforcement is the fulcrum upon which the effectiveness of pipeline protection and oil regulation balances.

### **Nigerian Navy and Joint Task Force (JTF)**

Joint Patrols, real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated enforcement operations with the neighbouring coastal; states should be institutionalized. In the context of oil theft, the Nigerian Navy and the Joint Task Force (Operation Delta Safe) are responsible for surveillance, interdiction, and arrest of oil thieves and vandals. Their role is crucial given the interdiction nature of oil theft networks.

### **Enforcement Mechanism under Nigerian Law**

The Nigerian Legal system provides for three core categories of enforcement mechanisms in oil-sector regulation: administrative, civil, and criminal enforcement. Each serves a distinct function but collectively contributes to comprehensive enforcement architecture.

### **Judicial Enforcement in Pipeline and Oil Theft Cases**

The criminal dimension of oil theft illegal refining, and pipeline vandalism under the miscellaneous offences Act, oil theft attract life imprisonment. The petroleum industry Act also criminalises sabotage and unauthorised dealing in petroleum products. The role of the courts is often undermined by long delays in trial and judgement delivery; procedural hurdles (e.g. locus standi, jurisdictional objections); There are instances of rare criminal prosecution of high profile offenders and political interference remains a persistent barrier. The way forward is fast track prosecution through the establishment of special oil-related courts for speedy trials.

### **Technological Solutions**

Pipeline surveillance drones, CCTV systems, and AI-based monitoring tools should be deployed along vulnerable pipeline routes. Improving surveillance and enforcement through, coastal radar systems, vessel. Tracking system, (VTS), AI-powered analytics for anomaly detection.

### **Strengthen Enforcement Mechanism and Control of money laundering from oil theft.**

To curb transnational money laundering from the proceed of oil theft, there is a pressing need for the government to work with the financial Action Task Force (FATF) to trace illicit financial flows linked to oil theft.

### **Environmental Education**

Many illegal refiners are unaware of the long-term ecological harm their activities cause. Public education campaigns-delivered through radio, town halls, and social media – should:

- Highlight the health risks of crude exposure.
- Show the link between oil theft and marine pollution.
- Promote civic duty in protecting natural resources.

### **Legal reforms**

- (i) There is a need to strengthen the legal framework specifically at the intersection of maritime security and pipeline protection. Provisions under the SPOMO Act, Petroleum Industry Act, Oil Pipelines Act and criminal statutes should be reviewed to clarify jurisdiction and offences where vandalisation on

land leads to maritime transport and export of stolen crude. Clearer statutory linkages between land-based sabotage and maritime offences could reduce ambiguity over charging decisions and improve prosecution of complex cases involving both pipelines and vessels.

- (ii) Detailed regulations and guidelines should be issued to enhance evidence gathering, chain of custody, and financial investigations in oil theft cases, so that prosecutions are more likely to result in conviction rather than being struck out on technical grounds.<sup>59</sup>
- (iii) Legislative and regulatory support for transparency and accountability in enforcement operations should be enhanced. This could include mandatory reporting requirements for seizures and destruction of illegal refineries, public registers of concluded cases and penalties, and stronger oversight of security agencies involved in maritime and pipeline security, in order to deter collusion and corruption. Such reforms would help align the legal framework more closely with the realities of oil-related crime in the Niger Delta.

### **Institutional and Operational measures**

Institutionally, clearer delineation of roles and improved cooperation between the Nigerian Navy, NIMASA, Marine Police, NSCDC and petroleum regulators are essential. Joint standard operating procedures and inter-agency tasking arrangements should be formalised to reduce duplication and ensure that information on pipeline breaches and suspicious maritime activities is shared promptly and acted upon. Enhanced use of maritime domain awareness tools, including those deployed under the Deep Blue Project, should be paired with effective legal follow-up so that arrests at sea translate into successful prosecutions in court.

Operationally, specialised investigative units with expertise in petroleum theft, financial tracing and maritime operations should be strengthened or established within existing agencies. Training programmes for prosecutors and judges on the technical aspects of oil theft and maritime crime would help ensure that complex cases are properly understood and adjudicated. Regular joint exercises and scenario-based training among maritime and land-based security forces could also improve coordination in responding to incidents that begin on pipelines and move into rivers and coastal waters.

### **Promote Transparency and Accountability**

Anti-corruption efforts in the oil and maritime sectors, including greater transparency around crude production, pipeline surveillance contracts and the handling of recovered stolen oil, are also critical to restoring trust and aligning maritime security operations with broader governance reforms. Combating corruption within oil and gas sector is critical. Mechanisms for internal audit, whistle blower protection, and independent oversight bodies must be strengthened. Official complicit should be prosecuted without political interference oil theft in Nigeria is not merely a criminal act – it is a national emergency. There must be protection of informants and whistle blowers who expose illegal bunkering networks.

### **Amendment of Sentencing Provisions**

Judicial discretion in oil theft cases often results in lenient penalties. The miscellaneous offences Act, for example, permits fine as low as N100,000 for pipeline vandalism – an amount that is insignificant compared to the millions made from oil theft.<sup>60</sup>

### **Privately Contracted Oil Pipeline Security in Nigeria**

Efforts made by the federal government to improve the security of the pipelines by hiring private security firms, has not put an end to the high rate of pipeline destruction and other oil facilities. The significant

<sup>59</sup> Baiogun, W. A., & Adesanya, O. P. (2022). "A sea of troubles": Oil theft, crude economy and the business of organised energy crime in the Gulf of Guinea. *African Journal of Stability and Development*, 14(1&2), 1-36. [https://doi.org/10.53982/ajsd.2022.1401\\_2.01-j](https://doi.org/10.53982/ajsd.2022.1401_2.01-j)

<sup>60</sup> Miscellaneous offences Act, Cap M 17 LFN 2004.

investment devoted to pipeline security remains unaccountable for and the method of security is deemed ineffective. For instance, the leadership of the Peoples Wellbeing Association (PWA)<sup>61</sup> has announced its readiness to initiate legal action at a High Court in Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) to halt the renewal of the pipeline surveillance contract to Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited linked to former militant Tompolo. The group is also advocating for the splitting of the contract among, multiple stakeholders in the Niger Delta region, arguing, that such a move would enhance efficiency, transparency, stability and inclusiveness across the affected states.

According to Aliyu Sadiq<sup>62</sup> the planned lawsuit as a last resort aimed at preserving peace and stability in the Niger Delta, which he said is being threatened by attempt by a few individuals to monopolise the surveillance contract through exclusionary practices.

### **International Collaboration**

International collaboration has its place to play in the role of curbing oil theft. The government needs international collaboration to stop the market and buyers of stolen oil and oil products. International banks also have a role to play as they also often handling illegal money flowing and laundering from oil theft business.

### **CONCLUSION**

The increasing number of oil theft and pipeline vandalism incidents in the Niger Delta has seriously hindered the country's efforts to achieve sustainable governance, thereby resulting in the lack of economic growth of Nigeria. The Niger Delta, once a rich ecological zone, has become a symbol of environmental neglect and human suffering.

Economically, pipeline vandalisation and oil theft continue to erode government revenue, disrupt production and damage investor confidence in Nigeria's oil sectors. Environmentally and socially, recurrent spills and illegal refining have degraded ecosystems, harmed public health and deepened poverty in host communities. Security-wise, oil-related crime fuels armed groups, arms proliferation and maritime insecurity in the Niger Delta region. These outcomes are consistent with resource curse and relative deprivation. Explanations which link weak governance, uneven distribution of oil benefits and grievances in the Niger Delta to ongoing vandalisation and quick profit has turned oil theft into an organised activity that feeds on gaps in law enforcement despite the formal presence of laws and security operations.

The increasing number of pipeline vandalism incidents in the Niger Delta has seriously hindered the country's efforts to achieve sustainable governance in its oil and gas industry, thereby resulting in the lack of economic growth of Nigeria. Oil theft and pipeline vandalization represent complex criminal activities that undermine economic stability and national security. These acts involve the illegal tapping, destruction, or sabotage of oil infrastructure, leading to massive revenue losses, environmental degradation, and threats to human lives. Thus, addressing these challenges requires more than reactive measures; it demands a coordinated and sustained approach.

The incidences of oil theft and vandalism of pipelines and other oil facilities remains a menace that must be combated in Nigeria. Tackling oil theft requires a multi-pronged approach: reforming legal enforcement, involving communities, leveraging technology, and fostering international partnerships. It is through this coordinated and sustained effort that Nigeria can reverse the tide of oil theft and secure a more just, lawful and environmentally responsible petroleum industry. Lastly, until Nigeria addresses the root causes corruption, inequality and environmental injustice and neglect – oil theft will remain an enduring threat to its stability and prosperity.

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<sup>61</sup> The Guardian Wednesday, April 1, 2026 P. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.