

Do the Health Benefits of Oil-Led Economic Development Outweigh the Potential Health Harms from Environmental Pollution in Nigeria?

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Abstract : Introduction: The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has a vast reserve of oil and gas, which has globally positioned the nation as the sixth largest exporter of crude oil. Production rapidly rose following oil discovery. In most oil producing nations of the world, the wealth generated from oil production and export has propelled economic advancement, enabling the development of industries and other relevant infrastructures. Therefore, it can be assumed that majority of the oil resource such as Nigeria's, has the potential to improve the health of the population via job creation and derived revenues. However, the health benefits of this economic development might be offset by the environmental consequences of oil exploitation and production. Objective: This research aims to evaluate the balance between the health benefits of oil-led economic development and harmful environmental consequences of crude oil exploitation in Nigeria. Study Design: A pathway has been designed to guide data search and this study. The model created will assess the relationship between oil-led economic development and population health development via job creation, improvement of education, development of infrastructure and other forms of development as well as through harmful environmental consequences from oil activities. Data/Emerging Findings: Diverse potentially suitable datasets which are at different geographical scales have been identified, obtained or applied for and the dataset from the World Bank has been the most thoroughly explored. This large dataset contains information that would enable the longitudinal assessment of both the health benefits and harms from oil exploitation in Nigeria as well as identify the disparities that exist between the communities, states and regions. However, these data do not extend far back enough in time to capture the start of crude oil production. Thus, it is possible that the maximum economic benefits and health harms could be missed. To deal with this shortcoming, the potential for a comparative study with countries like United Kingdom, Morocco and Cote D'ivoire has also been taken into consideration, so as to evaluate the differences between these countries as well as identify the areas of improvement in Nigeria's environmental and health policies. Notwithstanding, these data have shown some differences in each country's economic, environmental and health state over time as well as a corresponding summary statistics. Conclusion: In theory, the beneficial effects of oil exploitation to the health of the population may be substantial as large swaths of the 'wider determinants' of population health are influenced by the wealth of a nation. However, if uncontrolled, the consequences from environmental pollution and degradation may outweigh these benefits. Thus, there is a need to address this, in order to improve environmental and population health in Nigeria.

Keywords : environmental pollution, health benefits, oil-led economic development, petroleum exploitation

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