

## **Shallow Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation in Urhoboland of Nigeria's Niger Delta**

**Mark Omorovie Ikeke**

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy,  
Delta State University, Abraka  
drikeke@delsu.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

*One of the gravest environmental problems confronting planet Earth is biodiversity loss. This refers to the destruction of animal species, plant species, or other organisms, especially due to anthropogenic activities. This problem is affecting many regions in the world such as Urhoboland in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Biodiversity which refers to the diversities and varieties of all life forms in a community or location contributes vitally to human health, survival, and the well-being of the entire ecological system. In Urhoboland, biodiversity has been lost through oil and gas exploration, agricultural and industrial activities, herdsman attacks and violence, and other things that pollute the land. Through a critical hermeneutics and analytic method the paper argues that many anthropogenic activities as listed above are informed or inspired by a shallow ecology that sees the only value of biodiversity or the ecosystems as human utility. The ideology of shallow ecology sees no need to pay attention to conservation unless it benefits humans. The paper shows that plants, animals, and other organisms have value and worth of their own and not simply because they are valuable to human beings. This being the case, biodiversity should be conserved in places such as Urhoboland. The paper concludes that if this is done, it will help to create a sustainable Urhoboland.*

**Keywords:** Shallow ecology, deep ecology, biodiversity, conservation, Urhobo, Niger Delta, Nigeria, environment.

### **Introduction**

Biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystemic health and the well-being of humans. The destruction of biodiversity reduces many vital

services that different organisms and beings contribute to the ecosystems. Services that human beings derive from biodiversity such as pharmaceutical raw materials, aesthetics necessary for mental well-being, religious functions, eco-tourism, and so on are greatly lost or diminished. The conservation of biodiversity is essential. Human life and the survival of other beings and organisms in the universe depends on it. Biodiversity is useful for many reasons such as consumption use value, productive use value, social value, ethical value, aesthetic value, ecosystem value, economic value, etc (Srivastava, 2010, 110-112). Stated differently, biodiversity matters for it "...maintains ecosystem function, ensures human survival, enhances human societies, creates economic value, teaches important lessons, and can inspire new ways of feeling and thinking" (O'Brien 2010, 51). In the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, it is stated that:

The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development. As a result, there is growing recognition that biological diversity is a global asset of tremendous value to present and future generations. At the same time, the threat to species and ecosystems has never been so great as it is today. Species extinction caused by human activities continues at an alarming rate. (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations Environment Programme(SCBD-UNEP) 2011, 1).

Recognize that: "Biodiversity is the earth's primary life support system and is a precondition for human survival" (Rajagopalan 2011). Statistically, the current rate of global biodiversity loss is troubling; "The World Wide Fund for Nature's Living Planet Report 2022 documents a

69% average loss in the abundance of mammal, bird, reptile, fish and amphibian species since 1970. The populations of vertebrates living in freshwater ecosystems have declined even more, by 83% on average over the same period” (London School of Economics and Political Science 2022, 1). This is besides what is happening to plant species and other organisms. The dire state of global biodiversity loss has also been decried by many other authors (Rolston, 2012; Rozzi & Poole, 2009; Rim-Rukeh, 2009; Wenz, 2001; Ikeke, 2021; Asthana & Asthana, 2010; Edema, 2023).

There is hardly any region of the world that is free from biodiversity loss. The Niger Delta of Nigeria has also been gravely affected by biodiversity loss. No area of the Niger Delta is free from biodiversity. This includes Urhoboland. The concern of this paper is on biodiversity conservation in Urhoboland of the Niger Delta. By way of the procedure, the paper will examine and clarify the basic concepts, present the fundamental principles of shallow ecology, look at the situation of biodiversity loss/conservation in Urhoboland, examine the implications of biodiversity loss for Urhoboland and argue for the way forward to conserves biodiversity in Urhoboland.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This paper's key concepts are shallow ecology, biodiversity conservation, and Urhoboland. To understand shallow ecology, it is important to understand ecology. Ecology can be defined as “the study of the interactions between organisms and their environment. The 'environment' is a combination of the physical environment (temperature, water availability, etc and any influences on an organisms exerted by other organisms-the biotic environment”( Mackenzie, Ball & Virdee 1998). Another way to understand ecology is that it has two main branches-

autecology (which deals with individual organisms and their environment) and synecology (which studies interrelationships among groups of organisms or species living in an area (Ikoni 2010)). Shallow ecology which is also called light green ecology refers to:

A worldview or set of beliefs which reflects a utilitarian and anthropocentric attitude to nature, based on materialism and consumerism. It seeks technological solutions to major environmental problems, rather than a change in human behaviour and values. For example, shallow ecology promotes the recycling of waste rather than preventing waste in the first place (*Oxford Reference*, 2012, 1).

From the perspective of policy:

Shallow ecology policy goes so far as to recognize that the environmental crisis has to do with ecosystems, but it only attempts to find technical fixes to modify or moderate industrial environmental impacts. Such an approach embodies a 'management of resources' ethic that sets humans apart and superior to the rest of the biophysical universe. Under this approach, environmental systems are perceived as 'goods' and hence become understood through the traditional economic frameworks of technocratic-industrial societies. It assumes that society can continue with the same forms of response and that no fundamental change in patterns of behaviour is required. For shallow ecology, for example, education is primarily public relations to make people aware that they must 'shop green and recycle'. Cost-benefit analyses fail to appreciate the multitude of intrinsic values in the natural world which are open to human life.

*(Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*  
2020, 1).

Beyond the shallow ecology viewpoint above is another viewpoint that is also branded as shallow ecology, it is called the unrestrained that: "...holds that humans may do whatever they like to the planet, permitting the brutal exploitation of nature. The latter is sensitive to the potential damage of such unrestrained exploits to future people, using the theory of externalities of modern economics" (Heyd, 1992, 205). The popular version of shallow ecology is called later in the previous sentence, this shows some concern for nature. The one of major concerns for this paper is the unrestrained type.

What is biodiversity conservation? It means "...the variety of life forms; the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems they form" (Srivastava, 2010, 101). Another way to define it is that it is "...the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part"( SCBD-UNEP, 1992). Biodiversity or biological diversity is of three types- genetic (genetic information carried in all animals, plants, and microorganisms), species (variety of species in a habitat), and ecosystem (broad differences in ecosystem types). Conservation deals with preservation, protecting, keeping, and storing from harm and damage. Biodiversity conservation refers to efforts by human beings to prevent or reverse damages affecting plants, animals, microorganisms, and other realities in nature; and this is to ensure that ecosystems and their life-supporting ways are maintained and species are preserved in their diversity; while observing suitable utilization of ecosystems and species (Srivastava, 2010, 123). This idea of what biodiversity aims at is also

corroborated by the following statement that biodiversity conservation can also be seen as: “the preservation of genetic variation, the diversity of species and populations and also life support properties of ecosystems, such as climatic and drainage effects” (Mackenzie, Ball & Virdee 1998, 271).

Urhoboland is located in Delta State in Nigeria. It is located in the Western Niger Delta. They are the major ethnic group in Delta State. The area that Urhoboland covers is mainly inhabited by the Urhobo ethnic nationality though today people of other ethnic nationalities also dwell there and have made it home or do their businesses and occupations there. The area is part of Nigeria's Niger Delta and shares many of the characteristics of the Niger Delta. The area is endowed with vegetation, agricultural resources, petroleum resources, and other natural resources (Abotutu, 2015, 16). The native language of the Urhobo people is the Urhobo language, and many also speak English and other adopted languages. The Urhobo people are: “... the fifth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, 15th largest in Africa, and consistent with statistical data, they are the 51st largest ethnic group in the world. One of the largest oil producers is Nigeria, the 21st in Africa and the 45th in the world” (Gbinije, 2013, par 2). About traditional administration there are “... 24 kingdoms in Urhobo land approved by the Delta State Government, namely: Agbon, Agbarho, Aravwarien, Agbarho-otor, Olomu, Udu, Ogor, Uwherun, Ewreni, Ughievwen, Ewu, Okparabe, Effurun-otor, Oghara, Ijerhe, Mosogar, Oruarivie-Abraka, Umiagwa- Abraka, Okpe, Orogun, Okere-Urhobo and Uvwie” (Gbinije 2013, par 10). The two other kingdoms are Ughelli and Agharha-Warri.

### **Fundamental Principles of Swallow Ecology**

Swallow ecology is anthropocentric, focused on and solely

concerned with human interests and desires. If it will benefit the human, well and okay. If it will not benefit the human then it is not important to be attended to. It is focused according the Arne Naess, propounder of deep ecology on the prosperity of affluent peoples in wealthy nations (Naess, 1999). Shallow ecology was a term used by Naess to contrast deep ecology, while deep ecology is concerned with the intrinsic value of all things, shallow ecology is simply focused on the prevention of pollution and attends to environmental issues only as they affect human beings. He writes: “The shallow ecology movement has just two objectives: Combating pollution and combating the depletion of natural resources. The objectives are isolated from the broader problems concerning ways of life, economic systems, power structures, and the differences between and inside nations” (Naess, 2008, 1). The implication is that: “For example, a deep ecologist would clean up a pond because plants and animals deserve a pristine habitat and the woods should be allowed to evolve at their own rate. A shallow ecologist would preserve the pond so his children have a place to swim and the watershed quality improves” (Sullivan, 2009, par 7).

Things that characterize shallow ecology include: any preservation should be to meet human needs, with no need for radical change; and present lifestyle should be continued but there should be an aim to prevent what damages the environment because of humans, and its special concern is protecting the lifestyles of those in developed nations (Srinivasan, 2022). In opposition to shallow ecology is deep ecology:

The core theme of deep ecology is the claim that all living things have the same right to live and flourish. This means that the interests of other living beings have to be treated as seriously as the interests of humans. A rainforest, for example, can no longer be regarded as a valueless wood

resource. Instead, it is a collection of living things, all of which have a right to live and flourish. Nature is said to have intrinsic value. It is valuable even if humans can find no use for it. From a deep ecological perspective, climate change is wrong because it will affect the wellbeing of billions of living beings. Even if we could provide a way of protecting humans from climate change, it would still be a bad thing because many other living beings would suffer. Another aspect of deep ecology is the idea that we should expand our idea of who we are so that it includes the natural world. This is known sometimes as the expanded self. If we harm nature then we are really harming ourselves. Deep ecology rejects anthropocentrism in favour of ecocentrism or biocentrism (Deep and Shallow Ecology Explanations, n.d, 1)

A key supporter of shallow ecology is Anthony Weston, an American philosopher and interpreter of Aldo Leopold. He does not go as deep as deep ecology and asserts that rights should not be given to trees and other organisms and for him there is no need for environmental ethics to preserve the planet and for the sake of future generations, our approach must be pragmatic. Shallow ecology considers human beings as distinct and separate from the environment. Human beings as it is are placed above and higher than other things in nature. It is human beings who create value, all values are anthropogenic and focused on human interests. Only human beings have intrinsic value, and all others in the environment have instrumental value. The environment should only be maintained because of its value or contribution to human beings. Human beings and other things in nature are placed in competition with one another, instead of being in mutual synergy and commensalism. As it is humans are parasitic.



There should be no limit on economic growth and social development as far as they benefit humans. Note that: “Shallow ecology practices pragmatic and anthropocentric forms of environmentalism such as focusing on issues such as pollution control and resource conservation” (Study Smarter, n.d, par 4). In the same place, it is stated that: “Shallow ecology is an environmental perspective that primarily focuses on the sustainability of the environment for the benefit of human beings. It promotes actions like pollution reduction, resource conservation, and environmental clean-up primarily because of their impact on human health and wellbeing, as opposed to the intrinsic value of the natural world itself” (Study Smarter, n.d, 1)

Arising from the above there are three main principles of shallow ecology: weak sustainability, limits to growth, and intergenerational equity. The first means that sustainability can be practiced but only for the benefit of humans. Capitalism needs to be moderated so that it does not destroy the earth to the detriment of humans. There is nothing wrong with the sustainable use of natural resources so that they are not depleted. This is done for the good of human beings. So governments can have policies in place to regulate fishing, farming activities, use of wilderness, etc. There should be limits on economic growth so that the earth can meet the needs of its population. There should be the practice of intergenerational equity. The earth should be maintained so that it meets the use of future generations. But realize also as discussed above there is the unrestrained type of shallower viewpoints that asserts that human beings can exploit nature without restraint. This is very dangerous for biodiversity conservation.

### **The Situation of Biodiversity Conservation in Urhoboland**

There is natural biodiversity loss that comes from the extinction of species that occurs in the process of evolution as in the process different

species have died out (Srivastava 2010). This is not the one of concern here. The one of concern here is the one caused by human activities. Human activities that can cause biodiversity loss are agriculture, hunting, habitat destruction, deforestation, extractive industries, population growth, migration, war and violence, and so on. Richard Leakey, a Kenya paleoanthropologist, conservationist, and politician writes: “For each of the Big Five (extinctions), there are theories of what caused them, some often compelling, but none proven. For the sixth extinction, however, we do know the culprit. We are” (Rajagopalan, 2011). As rightly noted by another author, “Species are becoming endangered and suffering extinction, ecosystems are being degraded, and genetic diversity is diminishing at a historically accelerated rate, mostly as a result of direct or indirect human activity” (Adelson, Engell, Ranalli, and Anglen, 2008, 362). Causes of biodiversity loss include habitat fragmentation, pollution, overexploitation, introduction of exotic species, and natural calamities (Rim-Rukeh, 2009).

In the present era, Ukpong corroborates this fact when he argues that biodiversity loss and eventual extinction are caused by human activities such as development and agriculture, and within a region such as Nigeria's Niger Delta, 40% of plants and animal species have disappeared (Uchegbu, 2002). It is imperative to remark here that Urhoboland is part of the Niger Delta and whatever is affecting the Niger Delta is also affecting the region. Human activities such as activities in the economy, production, and commerce are major culprits in biodiversity loss (Francis, 2015).

Urhoboland in terms of landscape “covers from mangrove swamps to the rain forest. There are many rivers, streams, and forest” filled with fauna and flora (Ojaide, 2022, 3). The land is rich with “a high biodiversity of insects, reptiles, birds and mammals... over 100 species of fish” but

they are endangered today (Ekuerhare, 2007). From the experience of this present writer when he was growing up in Otogor town in Ughelli North Local Government Area there used to be a lot of monkeys, bush babies (galagoes), squirrels, and antelopes in the forests in the area. You can hear the cry of bush babies and their jumping in the bush. But today the situation is different. Many of them have been killed and they have lost their habitat as a result of the felling of trees to build houses for human habitation, markets, and other factories. The streams that used to be filled with fish and other animals are no longer so. This author remembers while growing up going to catch fish and hunt other animals at night that were readily available at the edge of the waters and bushes. The reality is that biodiversity in the Urhoboland has been gravely depleted.

Many factors are responsible for the depletion of biodiversity in Urhoboland. Environmental degradation arising from air pollution, marine pollution, and gas flaring have serious negative impacts on flora, fauna, and ecosystems. Note that: “Various species of plants and animals that help to sustain lives are often destroyed with serious ecological consequences. For human populations, farmlands for food production are destroyed. Cultural artefacts are also destroyed which could also create socio-cultural conflicts” (Anikpo, 2015, 4). In places like Effurun-Otor, Jesses, Amukpe, Afiesere, Erhumukohwarien, and other oil-bearing communities in Urhoboland ecosystems have been destroyed and gas flares have killed fishes, trees, birds, and animals, and brought aquatic creatures into extinction (Abotutu, 2015, 16). General Patrick Aziza writes concerning the rich biodiversity in Urhoboland before the coming of oil companies as follows: the Edenic paradise in the land has been lost as a result of oil exploration has the serene environment and blissful streams and rivers are not polluted (Abotutu, 2015, 18)\_What is written about the effects of oil

spillage in Out-Jeremi in Urhoboland equally describes what has happened in the many other locations where there is oil spillage in Urhoboland. It is noted that in Out-Jeremi, “The ecological and environmental deterioration have contaminated wildlife and plants (Okadigwe, 2015, 34).

Economic growth does affect biodiversity growth. There has been a debate on economic growth and biodiversity conservation. The reality is that both are needed but a delicate balance has to be struck keeping in mind the view on sustainable development. Urhoboland like other locations in the Niger Delta and indeed the world is also experiencing climate change. It is undeniable that climate change is taking place. The seasonal weather patterns that were known in the Niger Delta are no longer there. Some years back the rainy season used to last from about May to September every year. Today even in the heart of the dry season in January and February you can still experience the rains. And when the rains come, they are more horrendous than in previous years. The overflowing of the banks of the river Niger in recent years has led to loss of human lives and destruction of biodiversity. Many villages and farmlands and forests in Urhoboland were also flooded. These led to the destruction of biodiversity. Climate change it leads to the migration of plants, human beings, and animals, and their habitats are endangered and these animals move for safety (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2011, 9). In summing up what leads to biodiversity loss in Urhoboland and beyond, let it be known that:

Many fragile species are endangered as the changing climate alters their ecosystems faster than they can adapt. As we develop the land so that it can house human beings or otherwise indulge our desires, the animals that lived, fed and bred there must find new habitat or die off. As we turn fertile ground into large-scale, industrial farms growing a

single crop, the variety of plant life in our ecosystems shrink. Pollution of the air, water, and soil profoundly affects the millions and billions of other creatures with whom humanity shares this planet. In sum, declines in biodiversity are the product of a degraded global environment (O'Brien, 2010, 4-5).

It is not only oil exploration and exploitation activities that have caused biodiversity loss in Urhoboland. The activities of herdsmen had also caused violence and destroyed plants and animals. Herdsmen come into Urhoboland and enter into the forests and people's farmlands. Their cattle trespass and trample on valuable plants, and trees, and kill organisms on the land.

### **Implications of Swallow Ecology for Biodiversity Conservation in Urhoboland**

The tendency is that a shallow ecology values only economic growth. It cares little or nothing about conservation unless it brings utilitarian goods to humans. Conserving plants and animals for only humans is not acceptable. Swallow ecology sees no need to put moral restraints on economic growth. When the paper speaks of limits to economic growth it does not mean that there will be no economic development. But it should not be to the detriment of ecological conservation. The unrestrained version of shallow ecology leads to exploitation without any limits. A person who follows the unrestrained version of shallow ecology will not even think of the effects of biodiversity exploitation on others but is concerned only about himself/herself. This is what drives oil companies in Urhoboland. They are most often for the profits they can make and not the well-being of the people in the oil communities.

Shallow ecology pays attention only to how the earth will benefit human beings; and if it will not benefit human beings, human persons should not care about it. The logic that humans should care only for what benefits humans is assailable. The fact is that there are species of animals, birds, organisms, and plants that may not be useful now but can be useful in the future. But that present human beings may not know now. Realize that: “The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses. Different species contain genes which could be key resources in years ahead for meeting human needs and regulating environmental problems” (Francis, 2015, 23). The fact is that consideration for biodiversity should move beyond the human interest to the well-being of the environment. Some species are being lost that are crucial to future environmental wellbeing. The author just cited notes clearly that species are not just resources but have value in themselves (Francis, 2015). For the shallow ecologist, we can dump garbage into the streams in the land, fall down trees, kill and even vandalize animals and birds in as far as humans are not affected. Human utilitarian pleasure becomes the yardstick for measuring what is moral. It is a return to the Protagorean maxim “Man is the measure of all things.” Shallow ecology is “limited to wanting to change the consequences of climate change, rather than going back to the causes behind it, mainly human activities. Deeply anthropocentric, shallow ecology would be a vain attempt to keep humans, especially those in developed countries, almighty over nature, with minimal adjustments to preserve life on earth” (Khalfaoui, 2023, par 3). The anthropocentric attitude and practice are dangerous, for

One of the things that have contributed to biodiversity loss is the human attitude of anthropocentrism and

domineering over nature. The perception is that nature is there for human utility and that humans can do whatever they desire with nature. Deep ecology affirms that while for essential needs humans can use nature they should not devalue or devastate nature. Humans have a responsibility to conserve and protect. This attitude of ethics with ecological responsibility, need to be accepted by individuals, groups, and oil company in the Niger Delta. Oil companies should be attentive to the tremendous benefits that biodiversity has for humans and also the ecosystem services they render (Ikeke, 2020, 85).

Urhoboland has suffered much because of a prevailing attitude of shallow ecology. With such an attitude; oil companies don't care about the destruction of biodiversity. It is how to satisfy the foreign shareholders that mainly concerns them. They don't even care about how it will benefit future generations. Vital biodiversity resources are being lost daily as a result of oil activities as shown above.

Because of its extreme anthropocentrism, shallow ecology concerns itself only with resource depletion and pollution, and not with complexity, diversity, decentralization, autonomy, symbiosis, classlessness, and egalitarianism (Naess, 1999). The pollution concern is not with the integrity of nature and the good of the entire biotic community. The concern is simply with human benefit. Pollution should be stopped because it negatively affects human beings. The human duties are to fellow human beings and never to anything else. If pollution causes harm to other aspects of nature and damages ecosystems and biodiversity it does not matter. It matters only when it affects human beings. Resource depletion

does not matter unless it affects human beings. The implications of all these for Urhoboland should be apparent. It is only human lives that matter in Urhoboland. Shallow ecology takes human beings on a slippery road. Oil multinational companies in Urhoboland may not know that they are operating from the perspective of shallow ecology, but they are. For oil companies, they care little or nothing for the environment. All they are interested in is the oil in the land and gas resources. And for many of the oil multinationals what matters to them is the profit that they can make for their shareholders. This is why they allow massive destruction to biodiversity just to prospect for oil, they flare gas no matter the law of the land, and ultimately the human lives in the land are dispensable. Environmental racism is taking place in the Niger Delta. Oil multinationals use sub-standard equipment on the land and cause occupational and health hazards to the people. John Vidal writes that when there was an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico the oil companies responded immediately to clean it up and do remediation work oil spills happen frequently in the Niger Delta but government and the oil companies hardly act decisively to curb these spillages; this clearly show and the issue of a double standard (Alimigbe, 2011, 24-25). It is as if the human lives and environment of those in the Gulf of Mexico are more important than those in the Niger Delta.

Shallow ecology, not the unrestrained type, does have a role to play in biodiversity conservation in Urhoboland. But it is a limited role and there is a need to move beyond the philosophy of shallow ecology. Beyond human interests, there is a need to put the well-being and welfare of non-human species into consideration. Shallow ecology does not require a radical and revolutionary change in human behaviours towards the environment. What only matters is that what will harm human beings is prevented or avoided. This motive for environmental conservation is not



enough. Simply adopting a shallow ecology ideology will lead to more environmental destruction.

### **Some Way Forward for Biodiversity Conservation in Urhoboland**

What is the way forward for biodiversity conservation in Urhoboland and even the entire Niger Delta? Things cannot just be left the way that they are. Shallow ecology is an inadequate ecological system for maintaining and conserving biodiversity in Urhoboland. This paper proposes that a richer philosophy that can help in biodiversity conservation is Afroecosolidarity (or a philosophy of *Akpojemudiakugbe*). This is a philosophy that posits that all lives and beings on earth and indeed the entire universe should stand together. No life should be less important or left behind.

Afroecosolidarity shares similarities with the ecological development paradigm. There is a need to halt the mass extinction of species in Urhoboland by ensuring that development projects are those that are suitable to the landscape and environment of the area, there is sustainable land use management, there are policies in place to ensure the right use of environmental resources and the citizens are made aware of what they can do (Abotutu, 2015). Humans must move beyond their anthropocentric interests and it is not just enough to think of visible mammals and plants but of microorganisms that we cannot see; so there should be careful study of environmental impact before projects are embarked upon (Francis, 2015). Economic development and the development of social infrastructure should be driven by ecological values. The precautionary principle should guide economic development and the implementation of scientific-technological development. What is the precautionary principle? The principle which emanated from the Treaty on European Union states that even when there is no conclusive scientific

evidence on the effects of activity or substance on the environment, the environment should be given the benefit of the doubt and protected from harm (Stranks, 2008). This principle should be applied all through Urhoboland. Whatever will harm the environment, even if it will benefit human beings should be avoided as much as possible. Unless it is for the necessary survival of human beings.

The reality is that it is not only human beings that should count, which is what shallow ecology is all about. Many philosophers and environmental thinkers have argued for the recognition of non-human lives in various ways. Land Ethics asserts that the land is a community and ethical consideration should be given also to non-human lives such as organisms in the land (Leopold, 1999). Animals also count in terms of moral consideration (Singer, 1975; Regan, 1985). There are intrinsic values in nature and human beings have moral values to conserve these intrinsic values (Rolston, 2012). The African value of *Ukama* emphasizes that human beings are related to nature and that their lives are incomplete without nature. The philosophy of *Afroecosolidarity* advocated here emphasizes that humans should live in love and care for nature and should not superimpose over nature (Ikeke, 2021). Indigenous cultural traditions from the Native Americans, the Aboriginals of Australia, Indigenous peoples in Africa, Latin America, Buddhist ethics, Hindu ethics, etc all show that human beings have a strong link with the land or nature (Ikeke, 2020).

The value of *Afroecosolidarity* does not just spread on its own. People have to be made aware of it. It should be propagated. There are international agreements and statements on biodiversity that place obligations on governments, individuals, and other groups to conserve biodiversity. These statements often are not known by many. These

statements include- the International Convention and Biological Diversity, Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration, the Convention on the International Trade on Endangered Species, the Antarctic Treaty, the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, etc. Indeed, some of these treaties do not apply to Urhoboland but Urhoboland and the Nigerian government can learn from them.

Preservation of sacred groves and traditional religious sites such as sacred forests should be embarked upon. Before the Western concept of nature reserves and the establishment of sanctuaries in both land and marine places, African people already had sacred groves, sacred forests, and many other landscapes that were protected from human industry and habitation. This tradition should be upheld. The two following articles from the *United Nations Universal Declaration* on the rights of indigenous peoples are revealing:

Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites (United Nations, 2007, 11-12)

The Urhobo people have a fundamental group right to ensure that their traditional sacred and religious sites are preserved. Oil multinationals and other capitalist globalizing forces rooted in a shallow ecology ideology

will care nothing for these sites. All that matters to them is the profit. there should be a move away from anthropocentric ethics. There is nothing wrong in human beings making use of nature but it should be done in a morally sustainable manner. Another way forward is the promotion of environmental assessment. This can be seen as "...the means by which the conservation value of a site may be assessed without detailed and time-consuming surveys of its entire biodiversity. Sites may be selected on the basis of a small number of conspicuous and sensitive species which are taken as indicative of the larger community" (Mackenzie, Ball, & Virdee, 2010, 271).

## **Conclusion**

The paper has examined the meaning of shallow ecology and related it to biodiversity conservation in Urhoboland. Shallow ecology the paper shows affirms environmental conservation but only if it is beneficial to human beings. It is an anthropocentric and utilitarian ideology or philosophy. If there is any value in nature it is the value that it has for human beings. This idea of shallow ecology the paper notes can negatively affect biodiversity conservation. Human beings don't have to care about biodiversity or other beings in nature if they are not useful to humans. It fails to acknowledge the intrinsic worth of other beings and realities in the universe outside human beings. This kind of attitude drives the exploitation of the earth for resources. This idea of considering only human interests often makes human beings dominate nature without caring for total ecological well-being. Shallow ecology especially the unrestrained version needs to be frontally critiqued and deconstructed. If this is done and biodiversity is conserved not just for the good of humans but the entire ecological community, a sustainable Urhoboland will emerge.

## References

- Abotutu, Abel A. (2015) "Oil Exploration and Environmental Degradation in Urhoboland, Delta State, Nigeria." In *Oil Theft, Environmental Degradation and the Reciprocal Responsibilities of Host Communities, and the Government in Nigeria*, ed. Christian Ewhrudjakpor, Augustus Atubi, and Lazarus Etemike, 16-22. Abraka: Faculty of Social Sciences of Delta State University.
- Adelson, G., Engell, J., Ranalli, B., & K.P. Van Anglen (eds.). (2008) *Environment: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. New Haven Yale University Press.
- Alimigbe, Francis. (2011) "Natural Resources Management: Oil Spillage and Gas Flaring." In *Sustaining Our Environment for Integral Human Development*, ed. Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 18-28. Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria.
- Anikpo, Mark. (2015) "Oil Theft, Oil Bunkering and Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta." In *Oil Theft, Environmental Degradation and the Reciprocal Responsibilities of Host Communities, and the Government in Nigeria*, ed. Christian Ewhrudjakpor, Augustus Atubi, and Lazarus Etemike, 1-5. Abraka: Faculty of Social Sciences of Delta State University.
- Asthana, D.K., & Asthana, Meera. (2010) *Environment: Problems and Solutions*. Ram Nagar, New Delhi: S Chand & Company Limited.
- Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. (2011) *Sustaining Our Environment for Integral Human Development*. Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/JDP/Caritas Nigeria.
- Deep and Shallow Ecology Explanations. (n.d). Available at: [https://loveofwisdom.weebly.com/uploads/9/0/1/4/9014354/deep\\_and\\_shallow\\_ecology\\_explanations.pdf](https://loveofwisdom.weebly.com/uploads/9/0/1/4/9014354/deep_and_shallow_ecology_explanations.pdf).

- Edema, Noyo Ederogun. (2023) *Oil Pollution, Climate Change and Biodiversity: Are Contaminants Bane or Boon in the Environment*. Abraka: Delta State University Printing Press.
- Ekuerhare, Bright. U. (2007) Urhobo and the National Question: Urhobo's Environment and Natural Resources. In *History of the Urhobo People of Niger Delta*, ed. Peter P Ekeh, 555-562. Buffalo: Urhobo Historical Society.
- Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potentials. (2020) Shallow ecology policy.” <http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/147562>.
- Francis, Pope. (2015) *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa.
- Gbinije, Bobson.(2013)“Urhobo Kingdoms and Political Staff of Office.” <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/11/urhobo-kingdoms-and-political-staff-of-office/#:~:text=At%20the%20last%20count%20we,%2C%20Oke re%2DUrhobo%20and%20Uvwie>.
- Heyd, David.(1992) *Genethics: Moral Issues in the Creation of People*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft309nb1nd/>
- Rolston, Holmes. (2012) *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millennium of Life on Earth*. New York: Routledge.
- Ikeke, M.O. (2021) “The Concept of Afroecosolidarity and its Implications for the African Environment.” In *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems*, ed. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, 317-345. <https://acjoi.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/1915>.
- Ikeke, Mark Omorovie. (2020) “Deep Ecology Philosophy and Biodiversity Conservation in Nigeria's Niger Delta”. *European*

*Journal of Sustainable Development*, vol. 9, no. 2:80-88.  
<https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2020.v9n2p80>.

Ikeke, Mark Omorovie. (2021) “The Role of Climate Ethics in Biodiversity Conservation”. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, vol. 10, no. 3 : 205 - 213 .  
<https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2021.v10n3p205>.

Ikeke, Mark Omorovie. (2020) The Role of Philosophy of Ecology and Religion in the face of the Environmental Crisis. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 19, no. 57: 81-95.

Ikoni, U.D. (2010) *An Introduction to Nigerian Environmental Law*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited.

Khalifaoui, Mathias. (2023) “Deep Ecology: An often Misunderstood Theory.” <https://earth.org/deep-ecology-an-often-misunderstood-theory/Leopold>,

Aldo. (1999) The Land Ethic. In *Thinking through the Environment*, ed. Mark J. Smith, 192-196.

London: The Open University. London School of Economics and Political Science.( 2022.)“What are the Extent and Causes of Biodiversity Loss? <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-are-the-extent-and-causes-of-biodiversity-loss/#:~:text=The%20World%20Wide%20Fund%20for,average%20over%20the%20same%20period>.

Mackenzie, A., Andy S. B., & Sonia, R. V. (1998) *Instant Notes on Ecology*. Oxford: Bios Scientific Publishers.

Merchant, A.K. (2023) “Deep Ecology, not Shallow Environmentalism Needed.” <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/deep-ecology-not-shallow-environmentalism-needed-1503203661.html>

Naess, Arne. (1999) “The Shallow and the Deep.” In *Thinking through the*

*Environment*, ed. Mark J Smith, 196-200. London: Routledge.

Naess, Arne. (2008) "The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement."

<https://tfreeman.net/resources/Phil-329/The-Shallow-and-the-Deep-Ecology-Movement.pdf>.

O'Brien, Kevin J. *An Ethics of Biodiversity: Christianity, Ecology, and the Variety of Life*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Ojaide, Tanure. (2022) *Urhobo Folklore. Aridon: The International Journal of Urhobo Studies*, 2 & 3, pp. 1-14.

Okadigwe, L.O. (2015) "Environmental Impacts of Oil Spillage in the Niger Delta Region: A Case Study of Out-Jeremi and Environs, Ughelli South LGA of Delta State, Nigeria." In *Oil Theft, Environmental Degradation and the Reciprocal Responsibilities of Host Communities, and the Government in Nigeria*, ed. Christian Ewhrudjakpor, Augustus Atubi, and Lazarus Etemike, 303-36. Abiraka: Faculty of Social Sciences of Delta State University.

Oxford Reference. (2012) "Shallow Ecology." <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100459865>.

Rajagopalan, R. (2011) *Environmental Studies: From Crisis to Cure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Regan, Tom. (1985) *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Rim-Rukeh, Akpofure. (2009) *Environmental Science: An Introduction*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.

Rozzi, Ricardo and Poole, Alexandria. Biocultural and Linguistic Diversity. In *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. J Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman, 100-104. Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning.



- Singer, Peter. (2002) "All Animals are Equal." In *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Collins.
- SCBD-UNEP. (2011) "Convention on Biological Diversity." <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>
- Srinivasan, Ranjani. (2022) "Shallow and Deep Ecology : All Forms of Environmentalism will not Lead to Effective Climate Change." <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-andenvironment/shallow-and-deepecology/article65404155.ece>
- Srivastava, Smriti.(2010) *Environmental Scienc and Ethics*. Darya Ganj, New Delhi: S.K. Kataria & Sons.
- Sullivan, Patricia.(2009) "Philosopher Coined Term 'Deep Ecology'." <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-jan-26-me-naess26-story.html>
- Stranks, Jeremy, (2008) *A-Z of the Environment*. London: Thorogood.
- Study Smarter. (N.D) "Shallow Ecology." [https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/politics/political-ideology/shallow-ecology/#:~:text= Shallow% 20ecology% 20refers%20to%20the,or%20'shallow%20green'%20ecologists.](https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/politics/political-ideology/shallow-ecology/#:~:text=Shallow%20ecology%20refers%20to%20the,or%20'shallow%20green'%20ecologists.)
- Uchegbu, Smart N.( 2002)*Environmental Management and Protection*. Enugu: Spotlight Publishers.
- United Nations. (2007) "Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)
- Wenz, Peter S.(2001) *Environmental Ethics Today*. New York: Oxford University Press.