

NNDC, CONFLICT, PEACE-BUILDING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION.

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ABSTRACT: *After over 54 years of the discovery of oil and gas in over 500 communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, the people are still “poor, neglected, under-developed and backward” resulting from suffocation occasioned by the Nigerian State, and the hazards and conflicts associated with oil and gas exploration / exploitation. This was followed closely by the prolonged, unfruitful peaceful negotiations that the people, spearheaded by the youths, have in recent times resorted to violent disruption of oil installations, kidnapping, hostage-taking and militia activities in the region. This paper is focused on the appraisal of the efforts of the Federal Government’s interventionist Agencies over the years with specific emphasis on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) between 2001 and 2010. This appraisal is imperative since the mandate of NDDC is to “resolve conflict and build peace” thereby restoring the confidence of the people in the region. It is the conviction of the author therefore that, the paper is significant in several respects and the findings and recommendations will to a significant extent forestall the looming war which in turn will guarantee peace and sustainable Community Development in the region.*

KEYWORDS: Niger Delta Development Commission, Conflict, Peace – Building, Community Development

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta Region has been embroiled in resistance against the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies. It has been described as generally restive, with pockets of insurrection and armed rebellion. The decades of oil exploitation, environmental degradation and state neglect has firmly situated an impoverished, marginalized and exploited the citizenry after much more than two decades resulting into an intense resistance of which the youth has been the principal vanguard. As Ikelegbe, (2005:208-209) puts it, a regime of state repression and corporate violence has further generated popular and criminal violence, lawlessness, illegal appropriations and insecurity. Thus, before the Amnesty programme, the Niger Delta Region has been of intense hostilities, violent confrontations and criminal violence. It thus, was pervaded by an intense proliferation of arms and institutions and/or agencies of violence ranging from the Nigerian Armed Forces to Community, Ethnic and Youth militias, notorious armed gangs and networks, pirates, cultists and robbers.(see Ikelegbe, 2005:208-234;Ibaba&Okolo,2009:3-18).

In terms of definition, the Niger Delta has over the years oscillated from historical at the pre-independence constitutional conferences in London between 1957 and 1958 to political at the establishment of NDDC in the year 2000. The historical context limited the geographical area to the defunct “Western Ijaw Division (Western Nigeria), and (Eastern Nigeria) the Rivers Provinces but excluding Ahoada and Port Harcourt” (Nigeria Year Book, 1959: 41; see also the Willink’s Report, 1958: 3-8). The Division and Provinces have become the present Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. The post-colonial Nigerian State Actors altered this situation and redefined the Region to include Akwa-Ibom, Cross River and Edo States due to the geographical contiguity at the time of establishing the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1993. It further expanded the context beyond this level to include the other three contiguous nine oil producing States of Abia, Imo and Ondo States at the birth of the NDDC in 2000, (see Etekpe & Okolo, 2009).

The political definition of the Niger Delta is synonymous with oil producing States in the following order of quantum of oil production: Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Rivers, Ondo, Imo, Abia and Edo States (Eni, 2008: 23-28, see also Etekepe & Okolo; 2009:1-3). This study is based on the historical definition of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States, that is consistent with the position of several scholars, Ekpebu, (2008: 4-11); Etekepe, (2007: 3); Tamuno (2008: 916-930); Okolo,(2004:74-78;2008:1-9).

The Niger Delta, as defined in the Willink's Commission Report of 1958 is the third largest wetlands in the world, covering an area of 70,000 square kilometres and is known for its sandy coastal ridge barriers, brackish or saline mangrove freshwater. It has seasonal and permanent swamp forests, and lowland rain forest. The *NDDC Profile* (2001:3) further describes the Region as one traversed and criss-crossed by a large number of rivers, rivulets, streams, canals and creeks. The coastal line is buffeted throughout the year by the tides of the Atlantic Ocean and the mainland is faced with regular flooding, especially River Niger during the rainy seasons between June and October of every year, (see Etekepe & Okolo: 2009).

The Niger Delta has been deliberately neglected, under-developed and what I termed "exclusion" by Colonial and post-Colonial Governments amidst repeated complaints and/or agitations by the people even before the discovery of crude oil and gas in Otabagi (Oloibiri) in the present Bayelsa State on June 4, 1956. Available record indicates that in 1956, the Ijaw Nation formed the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference to send Harold Dappa-Biriye to present the "grievances" of the people, and "demand for separate Oil Rivers State" at the pre-Independence Constitutional Conferences in 1957 and 1958 in London. The presentation was so brilliant that the Colonial Government constituted the Henry Willink's Commission of Enquiry to investigate whether or not the "grievances and demands" were "true or ill-founded". Henry Willink and the other three members – Messrs Gordon Hadow, Philip Mason and J.B. Shearer, arrived in Nigeria, and held public sittings and had private meetings and discussions in each of the defunct regions. The Commission submitted its Report to the British Parliament on July 30, 1958.

Dappa-Biriye (1995: 17-21), posits that the leadership of the three majority ethnic nationalities of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo persuaded the Commission not to create separate States for the minorities. Their reasons were that the States shall not be economically and administratively viable.

In a bid to resolving the conflicts and building peace/confidence, Obasanjo's civil Government initiated the NDDC Act of 2000. The NDDC, as stated in the profile (2001:5), "is the fifth interventionist agency in the Niger Delta to implement a programme for sustainable prosperity and peace to the region." The questions this paper therefore, seeks to answer are; what has been Nigerian experience in managing these conflicts? To what extent has NDDC addressed its' mandate on conflict resolution, community development and peace-building in the Niger Delta? Is the Commission doing enough? Does it need to do more? Are the strategies and results for managing conflicts, community development and peace-building adequate?

It is in the light of these, that the paper examines the consequences of the Willink's Report, and how the protests/agitations (conflict) have been sustained, and the state of the Region since 1958. In this context, the paper adopted the "failed-state" theoretical framework to analyse the phenomenon of conflicts and recommend proactive measures in building peace and confidence in the Niger Delta in order to prevent catastrophic consequences, which will in turn set in a process for sustainable community development in the Region.

Statement of the Problem

The Willink's Commission found the region as "poor, backward and neglected", and recommended the establishment of an economic development agency, in line with the other 5 deltas of the world, viz; Mississippi River Delta (USA), Mekong Delta (China), Nile Delta (Egypt), Okavango Delta (Angola), and Pearl River Delta (Macau/Hong Kong). Dappa-Biriye, argued against the "economic development approach", and advocated for a "political development approach" in form of the creation

of separate States for the people. These States shall, then, become platforms or centres of development. He was, however, misunderstood, and the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) was established by an Act of Parliament in April 1961. Apparently, after 9 years of its establishment, NDDDB did not develop the region due, mainly, to the inherent structural, administrative and funding problems earlier envisaged, (see Etekpe, 2007; Etekpe & Okolo, 2009).

In 1978, when Olusegun Obasanjo became the Military Head of State and Government, instead of revamping the NDDDB, he established ten (10) additional river basin development authorities, (RBDAs) by promulgation of Decree 87 of 1979 in all parts of the country, even where there were no rivers. The Government went ahead to fund the additional ten RBDAs much more than the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority. This, as stated in the Willink's Commission Report (1958:21), was a negation, thus, the policy failed. Obviously by 1993, all the eleven (11) RBDAs collapsed as a result of the politicization, sincerity of purpose on the part of successive administrations and the lack of funding, etc. Thus, the principle of derivation was drastically reduced to nothing. This therefore spurred a new phase of protests and conflict given the fact that the Niger Delta has metamorphosed to become the economic livewire of the country.

In an attempt to pacify the youths who have become apprehensive and restive, President Shagari's Government decided to reinstate the derivation principle, with the implementation of 1.5% (percent) derivation to the oil producing areas. A Presidential Task Force was then set up to administer the Fund. The amounts accruing to this fund were largely considered inadequate, thus, the level of restiveness in the region, intensified in a different/dramatic dimension. These, therefore instigated the then Military President, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida led Government, in raising the derivation principle from 1.5% (percent) to 3% (percent), and went ahead to establish the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1993 to administer the funds accruing to it. Although, OMPADEC, comparatively did better than NDDDB, in terms of performance, it equally suffered from the lack of a "master plan" that properly defined and articulated the developmental objectives and strategies, inadequate funding, official profligacy, unfavourable political climate, and absence of the political will to develop the region.

The failure of these economic interventionist agencies (stop-gap approaches) worsened the socioeconomic/political conditions of the people, and led to unprecedented conflicts in the region, especially from the early 1990s. Frustration/aggression School Thought, in Peace and Conflict Studies better captures this reality. Thus, people violently protested against incessant oil spillages-pollution, under-development, exclusion and the over 50 years of gas flaring that have impacted negatively on the people[s] of the region and the ecology of their environment. From 1998, the Niger Delta has become extremely volatile, characterised by mass youth protest, and perennial conflicts (Incidentally, it has remained so till date) no good water; no infrastructure; no good educational facilities; no good economic/livelihood coping systems and an endemic ravaging conflicts across the region, safe for the ongoing amnesty programme.

The Objectives of the Study

The paper is aimed at achieving the following general objectives:

- 1) Appraising the extent to which community development programmes and projects of NDDC are resolving the perennial conflicts and building peace in the Niger Delta between 2001 and 2010,
- 2) Relating and interacting meaningfully with the people in the oil producing communities (OPCs), NDDC and other stakeholders, to examine cognate values necessary for promoting peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta, and
- 3) Determining the relationship[s] between the NDDC; Federal, State and Local Governments and the oil producing /bearing communities in peace-building.

To this end, the paper specifically seeks to explain empirically (i) the Nigerian experience in managing the conflicts over the years; (ii) the extent to which NDDC has addressed its' mandate on

conflict resolution, community development and peace-building in the Niger Delta; (iii) establish whether the Commission has done enough or it requires to do more; (iv) determine if the strategies and results for conflict resolution, community development and peace-building of the commission is adequate.

The study therefore, is significant in many respects in that it will be of immense benefit to the various stakeholders- the FGN, the States, LGAs, the Multinational Oil Companies, the Oil Producing Communities, the Niger Delta region and society at large.

Given the setting, the paper is a systematic appraisal designed to transmit knowledge, and develop cognate skills and values on conflict resolution, community development and peace-building which apparently, shall reinforce and strengthen the performance of the NDDC.

Thus, the paper examines the ways in which NDDC conceptualised and defines conflict, and how such narrower/ broad definition[s] has impacted on the oil producing communities (OPCs). This is pivotal and vitally imperative, in that, the perception and importance NDDC's Management anchored on conflict resolution and peace-building is critical-success-factor to the overall achievement of peace and sustainability of community development in the region.

Again, with the challenges of the 21st century, and the increasing sophistication of conflicts, it has become necessary to assess the activities of interventionist agencies, such as NDDC in meeting these challenges and to make the agencies more proactive.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The argument of this paper is on the proposition that it is the constitutional responsibility of the federal, state and local governments through the security and interventionist agencies to manage and resolve conflicts, build peace and provide community development. For this purpose, the Nigerian State manages conflicts by regulating competition, resolving disputes, settling grievances and protecting the rights of all citizens. The paper points out that the fundamental rights and safeguards to forestall conflicts have always been enshrined in the Nigerian Constitutions since 1954 (Nigerian Year Book 1959: 9 & 13). The question then is why has the Nigerian State not enforced it? This is traceable to class conflict in the Nigerian State. "The class conflict", Nguyen, (2002) put it, "is as a result of Nigeria having failed as a State".

This paper, therefore, based the theoretical framework on the concept of "failed State" as propounded by liberal scholars like Max, Weber (1918), Stohl and Smith (1999), Cooper Robert (2000), and Nguyen, M (2002). For Nguyen (2002), "the concept of failed state" could be defined narrowly or broadly. He articulated the elements of each of the two perspectives. Max, Weber (1918) had earlier elaborated the concept in his contribution to the debate on "failed State". Weber interpreted the narrower perspective to mean a "political entity (like Nigeria) having lost its authority over its population and is unable to sustain physical force within a given territory" just as the case in the Niger Delta before amnesty was offered. Zartman, identified failed states in a broader perspective to mean, "when the basic functions of the State are no longer performed". Robert Cooper (2000) corroborates this view when he described most developing countries, especially in Africa, as "a world of failed states" since the states can no longer fulfil Max Weber's (1918) criterion of having the monopoly on the legitimate use of force and performance of its social responsibilities, especially maintenance of law and order, the current state of affairs in Bayelsa state of Nigeria between 2007-2011 and what is currently going on in the North-East of Nigeria graphically typifies this scenario, see (Etekepe & Okolo, 2009).

For Stohl and Smith (1999) who tried to synthesise Weber's position and concluded that "a failed or failing State is one in which the rulers either break the underlying compact by neglecting or ignoring the fundamental freedom due their people by actually directing the State apparatus (i.e., military, security services, and mobile police) against one segment of the population to hunt down another

segment". This is the situation in the Niger Delta where the Federal Government has made it a state policy, in resorting to the wanton military operations to purely civil issues. Reinold (2004) exemplified the military option as a camouflage for the Nigerian State's inability to provide positive political dividends and social goods to the citizens, especially those in the Niger Delta for the past 58 years.

In contributing to this discourse, Kukah, (in Yakubu, et al, 2003: 8) emphasises the fact that, "Nigeria has been weighed down by the crisis of State failure....The evidences of failure are manifest in several contradictions", and thus, posits the contradictions in the following manner;

It is a nation where the sources of conflict are also the basis for accommodation..., a nation of such enormous landmass, yet citizens are fighting over land, a nation of such incredible wealth, yet it has poverty like a breastplate (in the Niger Delta)...., a nation with so many office holders, but no leaders....Are the gods to be blamed?

The United States' Intelligence Council (USIC) in its Report in 2005, titled, "*Mapping Sub-Saharan Africa's Future*", predicted the disintegration of the Nigerian State within the next 15 years. Although some Nigerians regarded the Report as ill-motivated, it is apparent that unless the Nigerian State through its interventionist agencies like NDDC strengthens the mechanism to handle crisis, manage conflicts and build peace, engage in proper development for its rural communities the kind of instability and disintegration predicted in that Report cannot be avoided. This is because the sources and causes of conflicts – gross neglect and underdevelopment prevalent in the Niger Delta for the past 54 years cannot be merely wished away under the carpet as presumed by the political class from the majority ethnic nationalities. As a part of the people[s] from the Region, it is obvious that the interventionist institutions and the Nigerian State, not only have failed to address the fundamental and objective issues raised in these agitations, but interpreted them as an aberration or strange phenomenon that must be consistently be destroyed completely at all costs.

According to Lt-General Aliyu Mohammed, National Security Adviser to President Obasanjo, who incidentally held same office the Yar'Adua administration, then later he declared his intention to contest for president and now to be inaugurated as minister of defence in the current Jonathan's administration. It was a misconception of the agitations that prompted the Nigerian State to resort to military option and deplored over 2,000 military personnel under the auspices of the *Joint Military Task Force* to, "at best, completely destroy the restive youths in the Niger Delta". Experience has so far shown that the military operations have been carried out without regards to the implications on demography of the Region and the Country. Thus, the military option or counter-insurgency has failed woefully, thereby aggravating the situation because the people of the region believe peace-building cannot be imposed or achieved through military options. Adversarial/Iron-fist Approach is no longer fashionable in this 21st Century. Instead, peace-building and community development shall only be successful by a well-designed systematic process. It is my conviction that this process shall better be achieved via a documentary study (DS), which is to be complimented by oral interviews (OI), focus group discussions (FGDs) of the major stakeholders within and outside the Niger Delta region.

METHODOLOGY

The work concentrated on Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States which constitutes the historical Niger Delta. Incidentally, these States are also the hub of the oil and gas industry, as well as the theatres of conflicts in the region. Thus, a thorough analysis of the "gamesmanship" of conflicts, conflict resolution, peace-building and community development in the three States serves as panacea to the phenomenon of conflict in the region.

The basic method of data collection is documentary study (Bailey, 1982: 301-302). The documents in NDDC varied greatly, the paper analysed the followings, namely:

- 1) Making A Difference in Niger Delta, 2001-2006,
- 2) NDDC Profile, 2001
- 3) NDDC Status Reports in Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States, 2001-2006, and
- 4) Operational Records, Newspapers, Journals and Special Publications.

In addition, the paper examined eye witnesses' accounts (written and narratives) by Management, Middle Management, and Staff of NDDC, and three Multi-national Oil Companies (MNOCs), namely, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd (SPDC), Nigerian Agip Oil Company Ltd (NAOC), and Chevron-Texaco Overseas Ltd., as well as the oil and gas producing communities (OPCs). Others we examined are secondary documents published by experts and scholars on NDDC. The paper then compared and contrasted these documents and materials for purpose of longitudinal analysis. While discussing the advantages of documentary analysis, Bailey (1982: 302-204), posits that this methodology has a very "high quality, and relatively low cost", it is therefore ideal for this study (see Etekpe & Okolo, 2009).

This is complimented by the document study with an open-ended questionnaire that formed the basis of the oral interviews of major stakeholders. In all, we interviewed the following categories of stakeholders in Tables 1-5 and 1-6.

TABLE 1-1: Institutional Respondents

S/No	Institutions	Management Staff	Middle Management	Staff
1.	NDDC	3	5	10
2.	SPDC	3	5	10
3.	NAOC	3	5	10
4.	Chevron-Texaco	3	5	10
Total		12	20	40

Source: Field work 2008-2009; see also (Etekpe & Okolo, 2009).

TABLE 1-2: Oil/Gas Producing Communities Respondents

S/No	Categories	Communities in Rivers State	Communities in Bayelsa State	Communities in Delta State
1.	Paramount Ruler-in-Council	10	10	10
2.	Chairman & Members of CDC	10	10	10
3.	Chairman & Members of Youth Association	10	10	10
4.	Chairman & Members of Women Group	10	10	10
5.	Opinion Leaders	10	10	10
Total		50	50	50

Source: Field work 2008-2009.

In Table 1-7 the various oil and gas producing communities cutting across the different Senatorial Districts of each of the three States by means of stratified random sampling technique displayed. This enabled the performance of a trend analysis.

TABLE 1-3: COMMUNITIES INTERVIEWED IN OIL AND GAS PRODUCING STATES

S/No	Rivers State	Bayelsa State	Delta State
1.	Bomu – Ogoni	Oloibiri – Ogbia	Adeje
2.	Korokoro Tai – Ogoni	Otuasega – Ogbia	Koko
3.	Afam Eleme – Ogoni	Okordia – Yenagoa	Eriemu
4.	Oshie-Ekpeye – Ahoada	Etelebu Gbarain - Yenagoa	Kokori
5.	Edegberi – Engenni	Biseni – Yenagoa	Okan
6.	Umuechem – Etche	Opolo – Yenagoa	Olomoro
7.	Buguma Creek – Kalabari	Oporoma – Southern Ijaw	Oweh
8.	Obagi – Ogba	Diebu – Brass	Uzere East
9.	Obigbo North – Oyigbo	Nembe Creek – Nembe	Uzere West
10.	Rumuekpe – PH	Agbere – Sagbama	Ughelli

Source: Fieldwork, 2008-2009.

In arriving at these communities, we used the list in Table III – *Marginal Fields and Their Operators* in Azaiki, (2006:417), *Oil, Politics and Blood: The Niger Delta Story*, Ibadan: Y-Books. This was complemented with data sourced from the Area Office of SPDC in Opolo in Bayelsa State on January 15, 2009.

While the sample size may appear small, it is reasonable for us to achieve the objectives of this study, especially as oral interview and FGDs were not the primary instruments of data collection.

Given this setting therefore, there is the need to emphasise that most historical studies consists of document analysis. It is very popular within the ambits of Sociology, Max, Weber and Emile, Durkein relied so much on this approach. Weber, in Bailey (1982: 325) stated, “If good data are available (as the case of this study), historical research can serve as an effective complement to generalised scientific research by documenting the unique historical events.”(see Etekpe & Okolo;2009).

DATA ANALYSIS

The primary motive and mission of the NDDC is to initiate and co-ordinate development agencies within and outside Nigeria for the overall sustainable development of the Niger Delta region. “The developments”, as stated in the *NDDC Profile* (2001) “are in the following areas – infrastructural, technological, economic, ecological/ environmental, and human resource development in the area of conflict resolution and peace-building process.” The *Profile* stated categorically on page 13 that the “Commission has been mandated to ensure a lasting legacy of peace, development and prosperity.”

In order to accomplish the said mission, the NDDC Act 2000 provides several sources of funding, these include: 15 percent contribution from the Federal Government, 3 percent contribution from the oil and gas companies, 50 percent of ecological fund allocation to the Niger Delta member States, proceeds from other NDDC assets, and miscellaneous sources. The issue at stake is why, in spite of a “supposedly clear mission and several sources of funding”, the perennial conflicts in the region persist. In examining the Commission’s records, we found out that the Federal Government has released a total sum of ₦155.365 billion, out of the total budgeted amount of ₦436 billion between 2001 and 2009 in (Table 1-1).

Table 1-4: Federal Government Releases to NDDC, 2001-2009 (₦'000,000)

Year	Budget Allocation ₦	Actual FGN Releases to NDDC ₦	Releases % Budget	Releases % Fed. Govt Rev.
2001	10,000	7,500	75%	1.40%
2002	12,650	11,264	90%	1.85%
2003	10,064	10,064	100%	1.40%
2004	14,000	14,000	50%	1.33%
2005	60,150	17,357	29%	1.20%
2006	96,250	26,130	26%	1.13%
2007	26,565	24,000	19%	1.10%
2008	79,200	19,050	25%	1.30%
2009	27,120	-	-	-
Total	426,000	136,243	38%	-

Sources: 1) *Expenditure Department of Federal Ministry of Finance, Abuja, June 2004*
 2) *Office of Chairman, Revenue Mobilisation and Fiscal Commission, Abuja, February 9, 2009(see also Etekpe & Okolo, 2009).*

The data indicated that N156.485 billion for the 195 local government areas in the Niger Delta States is far less than the total budget allocation of N436 billion within the period of this study. While this is glaringly inadequate, the Commission's expenditure profile has nothing significant to justify the huge releases. This is largely because, instead of embarking on sustainable capacity building programmes and projects, such as construction of road networks, public utilities, shore protection, and manpower to spur development, the Commission was busy procuring and distributing dustbins, exercise books and chalks to primary schools, sponsoring inter-secondary schools quiz competitions, and paying very little attention to capital projects. This has made several stakeholders think that the release of the outstanding arrears of N300 billion to NDDC by the Federal Government would make little or no meaningful impact unless there is infusion of fresh technocrats to replace the existing bureaucrats in the Commission. Although, the FGN. has since reconstituted the Board, but it still requires proper restructuring. We observed that this argument is increasingly gaining momentum in the region (Azaiki, 2006: 215-240; Agbo, 2008: 19-21; Etekpe & Okolo, 2009:6-8).

The perception[s] of many people in the region is that NDDC is not vigorously pursuing its mandate, especially in the areas of conflict resolution community development and peace-building. It is probably for this reason, Mohammed Hamza, Leader of Northern Elders Forum, South-South Branch in Port Harcourt stressed, in *The Vanguard* on January 9, 2009, page 3 the need to reassess the activities of NDDC. A second thinking is that the youth of the region have lost their focus thus, are trading on conflicts. In this circumstance, it is therefore difficult to resolve the conflict and build peace/confidence in the Niger Delta. This is championed by the former President Obasanjo, and the Management Team of NDDC. In discussing with some of the Management Staff of NDDC, led by the Executive Director Finance and Administration on November 20, 2008 in Port Harcourt, the Management Team thinks the Commission has adopted a new model for the development of the region, and is centred on "human beings". In pursuance of this model, NDDC is said to put in place skill acquisition, computer training and vocational training programmes as major components of resolving conflict community development and peace-building. This is based on the conviction that the restive youths are those without gainful employment.

In reviewing the projects completed between June 2001 and September 2006, the Commission Report (2006: 4-6) stated that it carried out 247 infrastructural projects in Bayelsa State. This number was made up of 17 roads, 22 jetties, 44 water supplies, 147 classrooms, health centres and hostel blocks. It was said to have also implemented several human development programmes designed to build human capacity and empowerment of youths. Some of the projects were as follows:

- 1) Kaiama-Opokuma-Sabagriea-Polaku road and bridges,
- 2) Sagbama-Tungbo-Bulo Orua-Angiama-Ebedebiri-Toru Orua-Angalabiri-Ofoni-Ayamasa roads and bridges,
- 3) Otuoke-Onuebum road and bridges,
- 4) Odi-Trofani road and bridges
- 5) Ogbia-Emakalakala-Akipelai-Etiema-Nembe on-going road and bridges,
- 6) 9 jetties and shore protection,
- 7) 11 education-related building projects,
- 8) 4 health-related projects, and
- 9) 6 different capacity-building and empowerment schemes, with emphasis on skills acquisition programme designed to resolve conflicts.

The *Status Report* of NDDC further stated that in Rivers State, NDDC had 176 projects, with 33 completed and 143 at different stages of completion. Of this number, 86 were in educational and health institutions; 12, electrification; 32, water supply and jetties; 36, road, bridges, canalization and shoreline protection projects. Delta State, on the other hand, had 301 projects, out of which 135 have been completed and 166 were at various stages of completion. Of this number, 128 are in educational and health institutions; 42, electrification; 59, water supply; 19 jetties; and 41, road projects, canalization and shore protection projects.

Presented here is the summary of the foregoing *Status Reports* as Tables 1-5 and 1-6 respectively. In Table 1-2, we have stated the four components of Skills Acquisition Programme (SAP) embarked upon by NDDC to redress restiveness. We, however, expected that the SAP should have been substantially higher in Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States that are the hubs of oil and gas industry as well as major theatres of conflict over the past five decades in the region. Abia and Edo States, for example, that produce only 1.4 percent and 1 percent respectively of the oil have over half of the SAPs of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States that produce 18.20 percent, 30 percent and 18.20 percent, respectively (Eni, Helen, *Tell Magazine*, February 28, 2008: 25). Thus, Table 1-5 seems not to have any bearing with the realities on ground, and makes critics think that the programmes are mere window-dressing exercises that are not really meant to resolve conflicts, community development and peace-building.

TABLE 1-5: Conflict Management, Resolution and Peace-Building Programmes and Projects, 2002-2005

S/No	STATES	SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMME				TOTAL
		Mechanical Business	Transport, Health & Safety	Home Management	Building Bus. Skills	
1.	Abia	143	21	177	62	403
2.	Akwa-Ibom	267	88	296	70	721
3.	Bayelsa	365	55	250	71	741
4.	Cross River	194	20	163	60	437
5.	Delta	294	43	271	81	679
6.	Edo	164	-	149	89	402
7.	Imo	260	-	110	20	390
8.	Ondo	213	25	136	117	491
9.	Rivers	270	101	190	153	714
	TOTAL	2170	353	1742	723	4978

Source: NDDC: *Making A Difference in the Niger Delta, Feb. 2001 – Sept. 2006, p. 130*

Table 1-6 shows that NDDC within its first 5 years of operation initiated 2,035 physical development projects across the nine political member States of the Niger Delta (Aguariavwodo, Emmanuel, 2006:

27). The projects include; buildings, electrification, water supply, jetties, roads, bridges, canalization, shore protection, erosion control, and human capacity development to deal with conflicts. These projects are shown in Table 1-7.

TABLE 1-6: Summary of Completed and On-Going Projects, 2002–5

S/No	State	Awarded	Completed	On-going
1.	Abia	160	72	88
2.	Akwa-Ibom	335	102	233
3.	Bayelsa	247	70	177
4.	Cross River	64	9	55
5.	Delta	301	135	166
6.	Edo	212	47	165
7.	Imo	196	46	150
8.	Ondo	302	108	194
9.	Rivers	176	33	143
	Total	2,035	625	1,410

Source: NDDC: *Making A Difference in the Niger Delta, Feb. 2001 – Sept. 2006, p. 142*

It was noticed that Hon. Aguariavwodo, the pioneer Managing Director of NDDC, feels strongly that the “Commission has taken giant strides to facilitate an all-round development of the region and its people to resolve conflicts” (*Guardian*, January 24, 2006: 3).

TABLE 1-7: Summary of Completed and On-Going Projects, 2002–5

S/No	Type of Projects	No. of Projects Awarded	No. of Projects On-going	No. of Projects Completed
1.	Buildings	1,139	805	331
2.	Electrifications	316	179	137
3.	Water	283	205	78
4.	Jetties	62	25	37
5.	Roads	156	128	28
6.	Bridges	47	36	11
7.	Canalisation	14	13	1
8.	Shore Protection	15	14	1
9.	Erosion Control	6	5	1
	Total	2,035	1410	625

Source: NDDC: *Making A Difference in the Niger Delta, Feb. 2001 – Sept. 2006, p. 141*

Apart from physical infrastructure, the records perused indicated that NDDC is taking the issues of conflict management, resolution and peace-building as serious matters by organising series of skills and peace-building workshops for the youths. The Commission was said to have spearheaded campaigns in line with best practices (NDDC: *Making A Difference, 2006: 131*). These and similar efforts are said to have resulted in:

- 1) Asari Dokubo and Tom Ateke conflicts resolution in Rivers State in which NDDC was part of the Committee set up by the Rivers State Government in 2005,
- 2) Negotiation with militant youths and the subsequent release of six oil Company Officials taken hostage in June 2005 by Iduwini Youths in Bayelsa State over demands for community development,

- 3) Resolution of the conflict between HPI African Ltd (NDDC Contractors) and 52 communities in Ahoada – Abua area of Rivers State over rural electrification projects, and
- 4) Resolution of conflict between communities along Mbiama/Joinkarama and Consort Engineering Nigeria Ltd (NDDC Contractors) over renegeation of MOU where the Company was shut down by the communities from executing the contract.

NDDC, is said to have equally collaborated with the World Bank between 2006 and 2007 to organise series of capacity building workshops on conflict resolution and peace-building in the Niger Delta, and created the Directorate of Community and Rural Development (DC&RD) for strategic management of conflict. The benefits derived from the collaboration linked NDDC to the existing regional conflict monitoring system to transform staff from reactive to proactive engagement in conflict management.

NDDC also is said to have collaborated with the Christian religious bodies in 2008 to form the Niger Delta Christian Consultative Forum (NDCCF). The aim of the collaboration is to commit the issues of conflict resolution and peace-building to God as human beings have seemingly failed. The theme was, *“Reconciliation and Restoration (of Peace) in the Niger Delta for a New Beginning”*, and the prayer rally moved from Churches and Houses to Offices from Rivers, Cross River, Abia, Bayelsa, Imo, Delta, Edo, Akwa-Ibom to Ondo States between March and July, 2008 (We have attached the Prayer Programme, including Prayer focus topics and anticipated outcomes as Appendix 1-1). The essence of the prayers, which we equally participated, was for the “Niger Deltans to arise and pray down God’s glory on our region”. Be that as it may, we have observed that NDCCF lacks continuity, thus, it is difficult to assess its impact.

FINDINGS/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

In the NDDC Act of 2000, it is crystal clear and categorical as an interventionist agency in the Niger Delta; its primary mission is to implement a programme for sustainable prosperity and peace in the region. This is to be achieved through well designed agenda for infrastructural, technological, economic, ecological, and human resources (i.e. conflict resolution and peace-building) community development. It is in this light that, the *Logo* of NDDC has its motto: *Equity, Peace and Prosperity*. The study finds that in spite of this clear mandate and fairly reasonable findings, NDDC has failed to resolve the perennial conflicts in the region by embarking on programmes and projects that are not sustainable. The general perception of the respondents outside NDDC and MNOCs Management and Middle Management Staff is that NDDC is not pursuing its mandate, and as such its activities need to be reviewed. These categories of respondents, particularly people from the oil producing communities, have even concluded that “NDDC, like its predecessors, has failed grossly”.

As expected, the Management and Middle Management Staff, including primary documents of NDDC seem to disagree with the foregoing analysis. These categories of respondents argued that the restive youths in the region have rather lost their focus and are trading on conflicts. This makes it difficult to resolve conflict and build peace in the Niger Delta unless the youths themselves may be given leading role in the peace-building community development process. This, to them is equally dangerous because they are presently ill-equipped for this type of complex assignment. What baffles them is that they do not take the training opportunities seriously.

Notwithstanding, the respondents pointed out some of the programmes and projects NDDC has already executed within the context of “conflict resolution”, “peace-building” and community development. The two prominent ones relevant to this study are:

- 1) Resolution of conflict between Rumuekpe Community and NDDC Contractors on electricity and road projects, and
- 2) Resolution of conflict between Okoroutip Community in Akwa-Ibom and the Contractors handling the electrification project.

The study also finds that NDDC, in collaboration with the World Bank, organised three capacity-building workshops on conflict resolution and peace-building. These workshops have enabled NDDC to adopt developmental processes, such as community participation and empowerment. We were fortunate to have interviewed 20 youths and Community Development Committee members, out of the 60 in the two categories in the three States that participated in three of the said workshops. They individually submitted that the workshops they have attended were more of fanfare than capacity-building, and as such they have not been able to put the theoretical knowledge gained into practice.

Although NDDC has created the Directorate of Community and Rural Development (DC&RD), it is more of a service, instead of line function in the Commission. Thus, the supposedly sustainable projects, such as supply of dustbins, and exercise books to primary school pupils, provision of inter-state transport buses, rehabilitation of roads, etc. that are earlier discussed under "Status Report" as shown on Tables 1-2 and 1-3 had little or no positive impact on the welfare of oil producing communities. Abdul-Lateef Kolawole Abiola, Chairman, Bank PHB Plc as it was then known also reiterated this point in the "Annual Report 2008" to the Shareholders of the Bank. He said, "...the situation has been further compounded by the high incidence of poverty put at 54 percent nationally by the Central Bank of Nigeria but rising to 95 percent in some parts of Nigeria (especially the Niger Delta). This shows the great development challenges still faced by the economy (and the Nigerian State)".

This paper indicates that, like the Nigerian State, NDDC's effort to manage conflicts, build peace and community development efforts have largely been based on fire-brigade approach. This has often led to stop-gap and ad-hoc remedial measures. The data revealed that NDDC does not have proactive mechanism to detect threats to security arising from internal and external sources in the Niger Delta. In view of this, the Commission does not have timely and accurate security intelligence monitoring/gathering to enable her take appropriate counter-insurgency measures to neutralise or contain conflicts in the region. The paper revealed that NDDC does not equally have the capacity for Early Warning System to uncover gradual build-up of crisis that would culminate into civil disturbances.

In reviewing social conflicts in Nigeria, Elaigwu, (in Zartmem. eds, 1997: 197), stated the obvious as I quote;

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interactions, an unavoidable commitment of choices and decisions....The problem then, is not to count the frustration of seeking to remove as inevitability but rather of trying to keep conflicts in bounds.

He went further to discuss how Nigeria has witnessed about 140 violent conflicts between 1980 and 2005. Out of this number, 100 took place between 1980 and 1999, and the remaining 40 occurred between 2000 and 2005. Of the total conflicts, 80 percent took place in the Niger Delta. These conflicts consumed an estimated population of 10 million and displaced 25 million Nigerians. Elaigwu then concluded by asking, "What is happening to us as a nation?" (Yakubu, et al, 2005: 28). This question even much more relevant in the present situation we find ourselves in Nigeria. Thus the convening of the National Conference becomes very desirable and imperative.

Whereas conflict could be the spice of every State, it is detrimental to the very survival of the people of the Niger Delta, in particular, and Nigeria, in general. This is because conflicts threaten the consensual basis of the association of the over 250 recognised ethnic nationalities that were amalgamated in 1914. The type of conflicts in the Niger Delta that are traced to the Federal Government's act of marginalisation and underdevelopment are dangerous to the political system. This is because, such conflicts mobilise total loyalties of the people of the region and tend to defy all Government's counter-insurgency. The events that led to Isaac Boro's uprising and his consequent

declaration of the *Niger Delta Republic* on February 23, 1966 provides very useful illustrations of perceived incompatibility among Nigerian ethnic nationalities.

Even as the Niger Delta is experiencing unprecedented conflicts, the spate of violent ethno-religious conflicts, have spread to other parts of Nigeria, especially the Northern States since the outbreak of the Maitatsine riots in 1980. Ethno-religious violent conflicts have extended to Bulumkutu in Borno, Yola and Gombe in one flank and Kafanchan and Zango-Kataf and Jos in the Northern flank. The transition from military to civil rule in 1999 also coincided with an upsurge in ethnic and religious conflicts across the country. The renewed insurgencies of the Boko Haram in the North-Eastern states readily typify this situation.

Given this scenario, it is safe to state that the Nigerian crises have assumed new and more deadly dimensions. They are not only costly, in terms of human and materials losses, but represents real threat to national development and integration. The paper finds that instead of our diversity being recognised as a source of strength, it has become a fissiparous tendency. Thus, there is a delicate balance in Nigeria, and we foresee the people of the Niger Delta continue to create havocs in the country despite the ongoing Amnesty programme, except and until the objective conditions that necessitated the problems in the region is given due attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the historical/empirical analysis and the discussions of the findings, the following recommendations, becomes imperative.viz:

- 1) *Threat Analysis and Conflict Impact Assessment*: There is an urgent need for NDDC to identify the root causes of conflicts and prepare to be proactive in resolving them. In this regards, there should be a comprehensive threat assessment of crisis (CTAs) programme to highlight the remote and immediate causes of conflicts as opposed to the prevailing stop-gap approaches it has adopted over the years. Conflict-mapping/analysis readily becomes pivotal.
- 2) *Paradigm Shift*: Here, NDDC must ensure that conflict sensitivity system (CSS) should be infused in the operational policies of the Commission. This will attract the communities to participate in evolving enduring peace such a system is capable of providing the Commission with new tools for conflict analysis management, resolution, peace-building and community development.
- 3) *Development of Socio-Cultural Impact Assessment*: This is normally anchored on preventive diplomacy to guide practitioners in the formulation of appropriate programmes and projects. The programmes and projects are to be directed towards the enhancement of the capacity of participants so that they can easily detect warning signs and how to contain them before they develop into crisis stage. Within this model, there should be a conflict monitoring/evaluation indicators, conflict impact assessment (CIA) increasingly becomes imperative.
- 4) *Sustenance of Niger Delta Christian Consultative Forum (NDCCF)*: The Forum organised a region-wide prayer rally between March and July 2008. Although the turn-out, especially on the opening session in Port Harcourt in March, 2008 was impressive, there is no effort for the CD&RD to be sustained. Thus, the programme has “died” after the initial one in 2008, there is the urgent need to revamp and sustain it.

CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta has since the days of military rule been an area of conflict. Devastated by oil and gas exploration and exploitation, and neglected by the Nigerian State and MNOCs, a very high level of unemployed youths have taken over the agitation for resource control and management. They have

frontally challenged the Federal Government and MNOCs. Applying the theoretical framework of “failed State”, the paper appraised the role of NDDC in resolving conflicts, peace-building and community development, in the Niger Delta between 2001 and 2010. Within the historical definition of the Niger Delta, the work was conducted in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States – the hub of oil and gas industry and centres of conflicts in the region for an in-depth analysis. The paper indicates that NDDC, like its fore-runners, has not been proactive in pursuing the realisation of its mandate to “build peace and usher in prosperity” which will bring about sustainable community development in the region.

Institutional (i.e. Interventionist Agencies, like NDDC, and the Nigerian State), failure for the past 58 years has created a feeling of socio-economic injustice, discontent amongst the people of the region. Their reaction has gradually moved from peaceful dialogue to agitation for resource control and management. Safe for recent developments in the polity of the Country, were a Niger Delta son, in the person of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, has become the President for the very first time in the political history of Nigeria. It is hoped that, with this development and a proper/coordinated effort in sustaining the amnesty programme, accompanied with massive infrastructural development in line with the Master Plan by all stakeholders, certainly will bring about the needed development in the region.

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