



The Role of Federal Government Intervention in Development Programmes in Niger Delta

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Abstract

The Niger Delta region in Nigeria makes significant contribution to Nigeria's economy through oil and gas production but has long been plagued by various socio-economic challenges, including environmental degradation, poverty, and conflict. In response to these issues, the federal government has implemented intervention programs aimed at addressing the region's needs. This work aims to explore and analyze the role of federal government intervention programmes in the Niger Delta with a focus on their effectiveness and sustainability as well as the impacts overtime that has remained questionable. The paper used literature review to ascertain existing federal government intervention programmes. Case studies were used to highlight the various intervention programmes implemented in the region. Quantitative data from government reports and databases were used to gather data to identify the role of successive administration in Nigeria in enhancing development through the establishment of various intervention agencies and policy recommendations with the intention improving the plight of the people. The paper employed Structural Functional theory by Gabriel Almond to access structures and functions performed in the region where resources contribute to the Nation's economy from oil and gas generated revenue. The issue of militancy attack on oil assets as well as government's intervention by granting Amnesty Program to the agitators for peace, the protection of lives and property and security to region in the region suffice as major interventions in the Niger Delta. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Federal Government intervention programmes in the Niger Delta, offering a critical analysis of the past and present initiatives, identifying gaps and challenges, and proposing actionable recommendations for future policy formulation and implementation. The ultimate goal is to facilitate positive change, promote inclusive growth, and achieve lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole.

Keyword: Development Institution, Federal Government, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), The Niger Delta Environment.



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Introduction

The Niger Delta is an area covered within the Bright of Benin, Gulf of Guinea down the Southern part of the country and comprises of nine (9) states (1) Akwa Ibom State (2) Cross Rivers State (3) Delta, (4) Bayelsa (5) Imo (6) Edo (7) Rivers (6) Abia (9) Ondo. All of these states are oil producing States in Nigeria main hosts to the multinational petroleum corporations which are into production contract with the federal government. 85% of government generated revenue from oil for the economic growth of the country. The Niger Delta region, renowned for its significant contribution to Nigeria's economy through oil and gas production, has been grappling with persistent socio-economic challenges that have hindered its development and prosperity. These challenges encompass environmental degradation, widespread poverty, conflict, and social unrest. In an effort to address these multifaceted issues and foster sustainable development in the region, the federal government has instituted various intervention programmes through its Agencies over the years. The question usually asked are how effective and commendable are these Agency's policies been implemented for the benefit of the generality of the area with the core mandate. It is expected as contained in the various laws established by international agencies in the region to address key areas associated with development (CU Duru, 2014). However, investigation and an evaluation made it clear that they lack the capacity to bring significant transformation agenda, which comes as result of move corruption pandemic by their authority. There is no genuine intention by the political actors to move the development of region forward.

The primary objective of this study is to critically explore, analyze, and evaluate the role and effectiveness of federal government intervention programmes in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study aims to assess the impact and sustainability of federal government intervention programmes in addressing the socio-economic, environmental, and governance challenges facing the Niger Delta region over time.



The paper also analyze the role of successive administrations by investigating the contributions and initiatives of successive administrations in Nigeria towards enhancing development in the Niger Delta through the establishment of various intervention agencies and programmes. It further evaluate the impacts overtime with the utilization of quantitative data from government reports and databases to identify and analyze the outcomes, achievements, and shortcomings of the intervention programmes implemented in the region. Furthermore, by observation of the Structural Functional theory by Gabriel Almond as a theoretical framework, the paper assess the structures, functions, and interrelationships within the Niger Delta region, particularly in relation to the utilization of oil and gas revenues that significantly contribute to the nation's economy. There is also the identification and analysis critical challenges, gaps, and issues that have affected the effectiveness and implementation of federal government intervention programmes in the Niger Delta.

Lastly, based on the findings and analysis, the paper propose practical and actionable policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of future intervention programmes, with the intention of improving the socio-economic conditions and quality of life for the people of the Niger Delta region (Nkwede, Udeuhele, Ibeogu, Nurul & Nwodom, 2021;Sokari,2022). By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide valuable insights, generate informed discussions, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making processes that can lead to positive change, inclusive growth, and the attainment of lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole.

Methodology

The research work is qualitative and exploratory. Similarly, the data in this paper is derived from secondary sources and employed content analysis of other publications with the use of internet materials, library materials that are pertinent to the topic. The method was applied to examine existing literature on the subject. Upon the availability of the data, a coherent elucidation of the theme has been offered.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed Structural Functional Theory of Gabriel Almond for the analysis. The theory was articulated by Gabriel Almond and Coleman in their book titled “Introduction to



the Politics of the Developing Areas (1960)” They postulated four characteristics of the political system and eight functions apparently performed in all systems or at least in all viable systems. The functions represent concepts common to both western and non-western systems and for this reason, he claimed that they are useful concepts for comparing two types of systems; in spite of being derived by him from Western system (Mbah, 2006). The theory assumes that;

- (1) All political systems including the simplest ones have political structures. They may be compared with one another according to the degree and form of structural specialization.
- (2) The same functions may be performed with different frequencies and by different kind of structures. Comparisons may be made according to the frequency of performance of the functions, the kind of structure performing them, and the style of their performance.
- (3) All political structures, no matter how specialized whether in primitive or in modern societies, its multifunctional political systems may be compared according to the degree of specificity of functions in the structure.
- (4) All political systems are “mixed” systems in cultural in cultural sense. There are no “all modern cultures and structures, and no all-primitive. They differ in the relative dominance of the one against the other, and in the pattern of mixture of the two components.

Gabriel A Almond argues that from the functionalist point of view, a political system has two categories namely the input and the output functions. These functions are performed by different structures to ensure systems sustenance and equilibrium. The input category includes five variables – Political socialization, political recruitment, interest articulation through organized groups, interest aggregation through political parties, and political communication. While the output category includes the three organs or departments of the state- legislature (rule- making), executive (rule application) and judiciary (rule adjudication). Thus the function of political system is to convert inputs into outputs (Almond and Coleman, 1960). The structural-functionalist theory treats the society as a simply inter-related system, when each part of the system having a definite and distinct role play. Political party being a system of its own that exists inter-relatedly with other system, it can therefore be justifiable



that the theory agrees with this topic. Be that as it may, the approach had the following fallbacks. It was divorced from empirical realities of politics. It was also ethnocentric, with linkages to development especially. The authors of the theories were conservatives and static. Concerned with evaluating how systems performed roles expected of a stable democracy. There was little need to reform institution and only one permissible direction for change.

The theory has been criticized for being too generalistic and gives no focus to specific political system. It was also criticized for being ethnocentric, with linkages to development especially. The authors of the theories were conservative and static, concerned with evaluating how systems performed roles expected of the stable democracy. The theory was also considered a divorcee from the empirical realities of politics, hence Anikpo (1986) posits that “the major problem of structural functionalism is that its leads to generalizations, apparently ignoring substantial portions of the more unique characteristics of the separate unit.

The theory has been criticized partly because of its emphasis on system maintenance by which it said to be status-quo oriented and therefor conservative (Mbah, 2006). The theory talked about structures and functions of a given system in a given society and its relation with the research topic which investigated a political party that has structure and functions they perform. The theory is in harmony with the input function of public relations and has nothing to do with the output function. So federal government has succeeded in utilizing the input of political socialization and communication to mobilize programs in Niger Delta region through various developmental agencies and address related issues to ensure that the region is developed reflects the input output analysis of the structure and functions used by Almond in the Structural Functional theory.

An overview Government Agencies to tackle Development of Niger Delta Area:

The main objective of the federal government in establishing intervention institutions is to address the issues of underdevelopment of the region. The paramount areas are environmental degradation, poverty, infrastructural development, education, livelihood, criminality and the healthcare system. It is recorded that these aims are yet to be achieved by the agencies. Who have failed to deliver their mandate as empowered by the various laws established. However, in order to get the real insight of the activities of the institutions and, organizations it will be necessary at this point to discuss them independently with as regard



their constitutional mandate and further x-ray their performance with the developmental drive in the region. The federal government had charged them with the function to critically address the cries of agitation by the people of the area whose livelihood and plight have been destroyed as a result of oil and gas extraction.

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs

The Ministry of Niger Delta was created on 10 September 2008, by late President Umaru Yar'Adua as a ministry to join other development agencies to address issues related to development. The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs is created as a ministry of federal government with the mandate to manage and coordinate, promote and initiate development policies and processes in the Niger Delta Region with the aim to serve as a focal point for coordinating and mobilizing in the area of National and foreign assistance that are involved in key security and empowerment challenges in the region, which fundamental role is to ensure the effective implementation of the Niger Delta Action Plan. The ministry works closely with relevant agencies as well as international development organizations. It is important to state it clear by that the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs is mandated as the custodian of federal government coordinator of Regional development with responsibility to harmonize, align with governmental organizations with an oversight for smooth operation. The Niger Delta Action Plan is the document that sets out the Framework Development plan made by the federal government in the Niger Delta Region and it came into force in December 2012. By December 2020, there was a National Council on the Niger Delta held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State to review the 2012 Action Plan. It is expected that the Action Plan should be given a special attention in the implementation of its mandate and policies for the betterment of the region. For the region to be well developed, the various governments and agencies need to work in synergy as a team and play their roles to ensure that the Niger Delta is the most secure and peaceful place to live and do business in Nigeria and Africa at large. (Ubhenin, Oscar 2013)

Niger Delta Development Commission

The Niger Delta Development Commission is a federal government interventionist agency established through the Act 2002 No. 6 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria by Chief (Gen) Olusegun Obasanjo, with the core mandate of developing the Niger Delta oil rich region. The



NDDC was created in response to the constant demands by the Niger Delta as a result of the suffering and hardship done in their environment by oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the region. The region needs a total rehabilitation by way of infrastructure, security, and environmental cleanup, provision of livelihood programs, economic empowerment, unemployment, and poverty reduction. It was for this purpose that the federal government established the NDDC to address those critical socio-economic challenges of the region.

It is important to mention the mandates of the NDDC as provided in the Act 2002 in Part II. The Commission is empowered to:

- 1) Formulate Policies and guidelines for the development of the Niger Delta Area.
- 2) Conceive, plan and implement in accordance with set rules and regulations, projects and programs for the sustainable development of the Niger-Delta Area in the field of transportation including roads, jetties, and waterways, health, education, employment, industrialization, agriculture and fisheries, housing and urban development, water supply, electricity and telecommunications.
- 3) Cause the Niger Delta area to survive in order to ascertain measures which are necessary to promote its physical and socio-economic development.
- 4) Prepare Master Plans and schemes designed to promote the physical development of the Niger Delta area and the estimate of the costs of implementing such Master Plans and schemes.
- 5) Implement all the measures approved for the development of the Niger Delta area by the federal Government and the member states of the communion.
- 6) Identify factors inhibiting the development of the Niger Delta area and assist the member states in the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure sound and efficient management of the resources of the Niger Delta area.
- 7) Assess and report on any project being funded or carried out in the Niger Delta area by oil and gas producing companies and any other company including non-governmental organizations and ensure that funds released for such projects are properly utilized.
- 8) Tackle ecological and environmental problems that arise from the exploration of oil minerals in the Niger Delta area and advise the federal government and member states on the prevention and control of oil spillages, gas flaring and environmental pollution.



- 9) Liaise with various oil minerals and gas prospecting and producing companies on all matters of pollution, prevention and control.
- 10) Execute such other works and perform such other functions which in the opinion of the commission, are required for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta area and its peoples. (O. Peace, 2013)

In order for a better implementation of federal governmental policies and guidelines, the Act went further to ensure financial provisions that will enable adequate execution of its policies as follows:

- i) In Part V Section 14 of the Act stated that the commission shall establish and maintain a fund from which shall be defrayed all expenditure incurred by the commission.
- ii) They shall be paid and credited to the fund established pursuant to subsection (1) of this section.
- iii) From the federal government, the equivalent of 15 percent of the total monthly statutory allocation due to member states of the commission from the Federal Account. This being the contribution of the federal government to the commission.
- iv) 3 percent of the total annual budget of any oil producing company operating onshore and offshore, in the Niger Delta Area including gas processing companies.
- v) 50 percent of monies due to member states of the commission from the ecological fund.
- vi) Such monies as may from time to time be granted or lent to or deposited with the commission by the federal or a state government, any other body or institutions whether local or foreign.
- vii) All monies raised for the purposes of the commission by way of gifts, loan, grants in- old testament any disposition or other.
- viii) Proceeds from all other assets, that may from to time accrue to the commission.

The fund shall be managed in accordance with the rules made by the Board, and without prejudice to the generality of power to rules under this subsection; the rules shall in particular contain provisions:

- a) Specifying the manner in which the assets or fund of the commission are to be held, and regulate the making of payments, into and out of the fund.



- b) Requiring the keeping of accounts and records for the purposes of the fund in such form as may be specified in the rule.

By virtue of section 7(3) of the Act;

The commission shall be subject to the direction, control or supervision in the performance of its functions under this Act by the President and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with this power such as forensic audit to the activities of the NDDC and go further to extend the time of operations which now involve the Interim Committee that was set up by him for a specific function.

The Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission was another development agency established by federal government to address the issue related to development in Niger Delta area. Its main function was to administer the derivation fund from 15-3.05 percent. The Commission was established in 1992 by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida with as a genuine intention to develop the neglected oil and gas producing region of the Niger Delta. Subsequently, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission Act 1998 was passed into law the NDDC Act was a replacement of the OMPADEC Act where all assets and liabilities belonging to the OMPADEC were transferred to the NDDC as succeeds the powers of OMPADEC through the 2000 NDDC Act. The Act provides that, an Act to provide the repeal of the Oil, Mineral Producing Areas Commission Decree 1998, and among other things, establish a new commission with a re-organized management and administrative structure for more effectiveness and for the use of the sums received from the allocation of the federation account for tackling ecological problems which arise from the exploitation of oil minerals in the Niger Delta area and for communities. (Obiam & Amadi, 2022)

Presidential Amnesty Program

The Presidential Amnesty Program is yet another important body created by government to address the issue related to underdevelopment in the Niger Delta Region especially on empowerment. The programme been on Thursday 11th July, 2009 by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, as a result of environmental agitation by the youths, that led them to constantly attack and vandalize oil and gas activities, kidnapping of personnel before the commencement of the program. The region witnessed a high level of criminality and insecurity embarked by the aggrieved youths that engaged in militancy. At that time they



were operating under different names, most prominent among them are the Emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND) Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force [NDPVF], the Niger Delta Liberation Front [NDLF]. The Niger Delta Avengers [NDA], the Red Egbesu Water Lions, [REWL], Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force [JNDLF], Niger Delta Red Squad [NDRS] and so forth. These militant groups emerged as the voice of the youths in the quest for participation in the regional eggs which believed to have been taken and controlled by the federal government without considering the people that are affected by the damage done by oil and gas exploration activities. (Enahoro, M.A. 2021). Therefore, the indigenes especially the youths were mobilized to disrupt operations of oil and gas companies in order to attract the attention of the government and the oil sector international organizations who are stakeholders in the oil industry.

The Presidential Amnesty program granted unconditional amnesty for the agitators and the warlords to drop their arms in exchange for freedom as a step forward to redress the security matters that were on the highest level in the oil rich region of Nigeria, which was almost brought the national economy to an early grave. The measures taken by the government was a landmark aimed at stabilizing, consolidating and maintaining peace, security and protection of lives and properties in the Niger Delta Area of the country, which now had promoted economic development enriching government revenue generation. It was recorded at an estimated less of over N10 billion as a result of the crises, following a drastic reduction of daily crude oil production. The Presidential Amnesty Program has recorded some success in the area of youth. training vocational program, skills acquisition and overseas scholarship for the youths. All of these are borne by the federal government is intention to develop the oil rich region which nourishes national economic growth.

Another issue that was always raised as regard the empowerment of the PAP is how the beneficiaries of that program got involved in the activities. Some areas of the region are not aware of the PAP, because they are downside Sensitization and information about the program were kept secret to some particular sets of individuals who have taken the program into their custody. The federal government established the PAP to meet up the development challenges that will improve the neglected youths of the region through constructive programs that will be of benefit for a sustainable economy.



Niger Delta Basin Development Authority

It was established under the Act in 1986 as an agency of government under the supervision of Federal-Ministry of Water Resources with the responsibility to address matters and to undertaken a comprehensive development of both multipurpose use with particular emphasis on the provision of irrigation infrastructure and the control of floods and erosion and for watershed management.

In its provision, the Act empowered the authority, to construct, operate and maintain dams, dykes, polders, wells, borehole irrigation and drainage systems; and to works necessary for the achievement of the authority's function and handover all lands to be cultivated under the irrigation scheme. The mandate of the authority is to work as a development agency, service-oriented that will position the water requirements of stakeholders in the Niger Delta Region. It is important to state that, the Authority is to ensure good quality and sanitation and pay adequate attention to the preservation of the ecosystem, using proven technology.

Niger Delta Basin Development Authority was first established in 1959, the organization was charged, with the responsibility of bringing about rapid and sustainable development of the neglected region and was also to advise the federal government and the then regional governments of the Western (Mid-Western and Eastern Nigeria), on the infrastructure development program of the Niger Delta, (U.Oscar. 2013)

Analysis of the Federal Government Development Agencies

The federal government has established different agencies charged with the responsibility of tackling development in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria. However, for the purpose of this presentation some key major agencies were selected for discussion and they are the Federal Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, the Niger Delta Development Commission, the Presidential Amnesty Program and the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority. These are established under the various Acts of the National Assembly whose mission and objective for the set-up was created as demanded by the people as consequent of the negative effects of oil and gas exploration and exploitation on the environmental destruction of their livelihood in the areas. In their own part, government had invested so much money through the empowerment functions of these agencies to improve through the provision of infrastructure, unemployment, poverty reduction and basic amenities. The implementation of the regulatory



framework is another case of concern. Each agency has their particular mandate which was not promulgated as a main presidential order that can be abolished but operated under a regulatory legal framework but are laws established by the National Assembly the highest law-making organ in Nigeria. With the establishment of these agencies, it is remarkable to note that government in his entire structure has not neglected the region as normally reported by the people. (Enahoro, M.A. 2021)

Further, appointment of those to manage the affairs of the agencies are also noble, credible and professional personalities from the zone as the case may determined in support of Federal Governments willingness to develop. The organizations are never short of funding through statutory allocation. The issue of corruption is normally raised against the leadership. It was this condition that in 2019 led the governors of the Niger Delta States pay a visit to the President and requested for a total investigation of the activities of the administration charged with the management of its affairs. It was on the recommended the federal government set up a Forensic Audit to critically examine and audit the entire process. Currently the investigation is ongoing and in order to have a transparent process the President approved the appointment of an interim management team to work in supervising the Forensic Auditor. As many are agitating, protecting of constituting and legal board members and executive management, the government had made it clear that a new board will be constituted to take over the affairs of NDDC at the conclusion of the Audit. However, nongovernmental organizations and ex-militants, etc in the region have called on the federal board that will manage the commission as a legal body. It will be necessary to recall that the NDDC Act in Sec. 7(3) that it is clearly stated that the President is empowered to manage the affairs of the commission and also to give out direction of its function to any of his subordinate officers, which means that currently supervision of the minister of Niger Delta Affairs, ministry to the NDDC is acting in accordance with the provisions of the Act under the directive of Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

There should be a strong synergy among those expected to collaborate for the speedy implementation of federal government action plans:

The Presidential Amnesty program [PAP].

The Niger Delta Development Commission [NDDC].



The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs [MNDA].

The Niger Delta Basin Development Authority [NDBDA]. With peace and security in the region, absolutely there will be speedy development and also a return of the major international oil corporations to the region that will bring the creation of employment opportunities to the youth. (Enahoro, M.A. 2021). The Importance of the Agencies and the Collaboration to Success. The main objective of the federal government in creating these development agencies is to look at the level of environmental damage done by oil and gas exploitation over the decades which had led to different agitations, either by the youths, elders and the state governments with intention to have absolute control over their natural resources or Restructuring process which brings development closer to the people in the rural communities. It is important that the agencies should ensure the implementation of government's mandate and policy by which they were established. Government's intention to build a sustainable structure for economic development mainly through the establishment of the various agencies and Advisory Presidential Committees is to fast track improvement in the region. For instance, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Niger Delta matters is also a commendable step by government. His is to advice the President on physical related matters in the region. Harmonization of development organization in the Niger Delta Region.

The federal government should harmonize all the development agencies under one Ministry in order to avoid conflict of performances, duplication of activities, because it will bring about checks and balances for project allocation and execution under one circle. The federal government established law and formulated regulations which control the performances of the development of the Niger Delta area for the benefit of the peoples of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria as a result of the revenue that comes from the Petroleum fund and vested the powers of management and the development programs under the various established Agencies' Act.

Importance of Regulatory Framework for Intervention Agencies

Regulatory framework plays a very key role in the guidelines and stipulate for operational network guided by laws. It is remarkable to mention at this point that the institutional structures which set out the governance for day to day running, the symbol for which the purpose of government to perform it diligently with the hope of bringing fairness, justice and



equity. The institutions are also referred to as legal entities that can sue or be sued when involved in alleged fraudulent activities.

Dissatisfaction of Oil Activities in Niger Delta Communities/Negative Impact

The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has never been a success to the inhabitants but rather the displacement of many from their environment without giving them any alternative means of livelihood. Majority of the people are becoming poorer every day unable to feed, no accommodation, clothing, education, farmland and waterfront are destroyed. There are total rejections of these claims made by federal government and multinational oil companies that they are working in partnership in success which has led the international oil corporations come under serious attack. Environmental degradation as an outcome which the Niger Delta communities are suffering tremendously. Despite the huge contribution of natural resources that feed the pocket of the Nation amenities, infrastructure, unemployment for graduates and widespread of poverty, the hardship brought in insecurity measures, the government is not prompt to the needs of the region rather their interests is to tap the resources, and share the allocation of oil well licensed to themselves.

Their associates, the main people living with the resources are bringing. Even the established interventionist agencies formed for the purposes of addressing these issues on underdevelopment are the same gang of people who never saw any good reason for giving justice to the ordinary suffering communities and people of the region who witness high levels of poverty, insecurity and unemployment.

Over the years, the Niger Delta Region has been experiencing interrupted oil related crises. This represented a long time oil host communities resistance against marginalization, neglect, deprivation, injustice, environmental degradation and the destruction of their only means of livelihood. As a result of the ugly impact on the Region which causes damage for environmental justice, does not only come from the multinational companies, militants attacks on oil facilities, but rather some prominent leading politicians are working in partnership to destroy the zone. Therefore, some high profile citizens of the region have suffered or been killed by the comparators. A case in point to mention the renounced Human Rights advocate, Mr. Kenede-Saro Benson Wiwa who was brutally killed and alongside



others by the then military junta of General Sani Abatcha, led Head of Military Government of Nigeria.

Youth and Women Development Engagement Program in Niger Delta Region

Cooperate organizations, construction companies, oil and gas companies operating in the Niger Delta area should put as part of their corporate social responsibilities to assist in the empowerment. Of youths, women and vulnerable associations should use a platform that will engage them into the system, for a conducive environment for their activities because it will bring peace, and discourage all forms of criminal activities. When the host communities are happy the business will also go smoothly. Every investment is expected for a good reward by the investors, but a state of anarchy, youth restiveness, gangsterism and insecurity surely creates negative impacts on business and other human endeavour. Youth and women empowered in the Niger Delta region can focus extensively on human capital development, technical and vocational skills development. Human capital building program is well accepted to bring social innovation.

Restructuring and Resource Control for Regional Development

The Niger Delta Region seek for the total control of its natural resources, which it is believed will further enhance the development of the sub-region of Nigeria with the huge number of revenue that is been derived from oil and gas activities. The Niger Delta region is host to all the multinational oil corporations. However, the region is still living in a totally underdeveloped condition and witnessing poverty, insecurity, and destroyed livelihood by oil and gas pollution on the environment. The peoples of Niger Delta seek speedy passing into laws the Petroleum Industrial Bill (PIB) which is another latest agitation by the people of the region because there are provisions in the Bill that encourage the people to participate in the activities of the operation of exploitation of oil and gas, which was not included in the current and existing Petroleum Act of 1969. The law needs urgent repeal. The emphasis on the Act to empower the State with total ownership and control of all petroleum in under or upon any lands to which vested in the State with a selfish definition, without considering those that have and suffer as a result of its operation and consequently that may suffer negative impact arising in the course of its activities. With absolute power given to the government by the Petroleum Act, host communities do not have any say over the management of the petroleum industry in Nigeria and it now creates hardship on the people whose environment and



livelihood are being destroyed and poverty become the take home package of the host communities in the general expression of the Act while some people are enjoying the benefits of oil and gas generated revenue. (Sokari, V. 2022)

The Land Use Act does not favour an individual State or community in Nigeria to have control of its God gifted natural resources. If the region is restructured and resource is controlled by the host communities it will set an avenue to provide a system by which the resources will be used in developing the region by the people with their governing structure because they know what they want and require. There will be no need for prepared needs assessment by the central government even when they had established interventionist development agencies, there is still a record high level of corruption, godfatherism. Political influence in the area of administrative performance by the Federal Government which determination claims to work towards the proud of the people of the region. It is based on all of this exposure that the Niger Deltans are agitating seriously and had gone further to bring in insecurity, piracy, vandalization of oil pipelines, bunkery, illegal refinery and kidnapping. The region has witnessed great incidences of lawlessness.

Restiveness among the youths and the business of criminality had taken over the region, and supported by the military personnel deployed for safeguarding the Federal Government's Assets seen the main organizers of the crime. The restriction and resource control matrix will actually bring the people having absolute control and ownership over the natural resources endowed in the region and further provide a great and formidable opportunity of development in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria. It will encourage full involvement in the activities of the oil and gas exploration and exploitation.

The Challenges Associated with Development of the Niger Delta Area

There are many challenges encountered as a result of influential personalities towards the development of the region and have been hijacked by 3 classes of people:

1. The top and influential politicians
2. The top Ex Agitators
3. The top management staff of various interventionist Agencies



Oil and gas companies operating in the region are not given serious attention to release, the contribution fund as contained in the Niger Delta Development Commission NDDC Act. Their corporate social responsibility is poor, and they give more attention to the influential politician and top agitators which are chosen as main contractors. These major factors affect the development of the Niger Delta Area. Budgeting and project allocation are also controlled by these factors which make many communities in the zone not to have projects sited in their places, and are left behind. These groups of influential personalities usually decide those who are to benefit projects and those who are to be given contract, there have been a lot of accusations from even the government angle of the interventionists. These classes of personalities acted and brought interest to make government actualization in disarray its mandate in terms of developing the region. It will be recalled that government's intention to create the various interventionist Agencies was to develop and empower the oil rich region, where environment/livelihood had been affected by oil and gas activities and made the environment an unlivable place on earth any more, resulting to all kinds of diseases. The life span of the people in the region. These incorporated factors affecting the Niger Delta Region Developmental process also include corruption, god-fatherism, poverty, insecurity and the underdevelopment by oil and gas corporations that are major sources of destruction to the ecosystem, environmental degradation as a result affected the rapid growth in the area.

The peoples of the Region do not have the direct control over intervention Agencies. Another critical challenge that needs urgent attention and to be address is the host communities' participation in the decision-making of the multinational corporations which requires the speedy passage into law of the Petroleum Industrial Bill Act because it will fast-track development and speak volumes on behalf of the minority group by placing involvement and benefit to host communities of the oil and gas producing area by way of financial allocation from which oil revenue to enable and provide them opportunities to establish businesses and activities of their interest and give liberty, and some certain freedom to the ordinary people of the area. (Salleh & Dani 2015).



Discussion of Findings

The Federal Government's efforts to address the various challenges through the establishment of specialized ministries and agencies are commendable. However, the effectiveness of these interventions needs critical examination.

The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was established in 2008 with the primary mandate of managing, coordinating, promoting, and initiating development policies and processes in the Niger Delta region. It serves as the custodian of the federal government's regional development coordination, ensuring the effective implementation of the Niger Delta Action Plan. However, while the creation of the ministry signifies the government's commitment to addressing the developmental needs of the Niger Delta, its effectiveness is questionable. The periodic review of the Niger Delta Action Plan is a step in the right direction, but there seems to be a gap between policy formulation and actual implementation. For meaningful development to occur, there is a need for improved coordination, synergy, and collaboration among various government agencies and stakeholders involved in the region's development.

Established in 2002, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was created to address the socio-economic and environmental challenges facing the Niger Delta region. The NDDC is empowered to formulate policies, plan, and implement projects and programs for sustainable development, identify factors inhibiting development, and tackle ecological and environmental problems arising from oil exploration and exploitation. Despite its comprehensive mandate and significant financial provisions, the NDDC's performance has been marred by allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and ineffective project implementation. The NDDC's role as a key interventionist agency in the Niger Delta cannot be overemphasized, but there is an urgent need for institutional reforms, enhanced transparency, accountability, and community engagement to ensure the efficient and effective utilization of resources and the implementation of impactful and sustainable development projects in the region. OMPADEC was created with the intention of developing the neglected oil and gas producing regions of the Niger Delta. OMPADEC's main function was to administer the derivation fund and address the developmental needs of the Niger Delta region. However, while OMPADEC laid the groundwork for regional development in the Niger Delta, its successor, the NDDC, has faced similar challenges in terms of governance,



accountability, and project implementation. The transition from OMPADEC to NDDC was intended to enhance the effectiveness of the development commission, but the continuity of challenges suggests that there is a need for continuous monitoring, evaluation, and reform of intervention agencies to ensure they align with the evolving needs and priorities of the Niger Delta region.

The Presidential Amnesty Program was formed with the primary objective of restoring peace, security, and stability to the Niger Delta region. The program granted unconditional amnesty to militants and agitators in exchange for their disarmament and cessation of hostilities. This move was pivotal in averting a potential economic crisis, as the region's daily crude oil production had drastically reduced, leading to substantial revenue losses estimated at over N10 billion.

The PAP has since recorded some notable successes, particularly in the areas of vocational training, skills acquisition, and overseas scholarships for youths. These initiatives were intended to empower and develop the region's youth population, thereby fostering sustainable economic growth and enhancing government revenue generation. Despite its achievements, the PAP has faced criticism regarding the transparency and inclusivity of its beneficiary selection process. There have been concerns that certain regions and communities within the Niger Delta were not adequately informed or involved in the program, leading to disparities in its implementation and impact.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fundamental to note that the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is the Nation's economic hub where the resources that drive the country is been tapered from but the region is underdeveloped with poor state of living. The paper analyzed the involvement of the federal government in developing the Niger Delta through the creation of intervention agencies, which record of development are yet to give credit. Successive administrations in the country had tried with program to ensure sustainable development through the establishment of agencies who see the demand requested as an offence as a result that brought in restiveness and insecurity by the youths. The region had suffered greatly from oil and gas exploration and exploitation operations which was supposed to be a blessing, a gift



but rather became a source of pains and agony to the people. It was observed that the solution to developing, the Niger Delta regions does not necessary mean to establish numerous agencies or ministries with same responsibilities by government but need to develop and form a right intention that will enforce and implement its desire towards developmental programs. It has been noted that the process of appointment for members had been too political which in turn affected the performances of the various agencies to the dissatisfaction of the people. Party structure, loyalty associates are not influencing the governance process as a result of who is the leader in the Niger Delta Area and had brought in setbacks on a serious interpretation the Niger Delta Area Master Plan should be put in place. The project/Contract awarded should be preparing to monitor and be evaluated by the various agencies to enable sustainable development. There is a great gap between the beneficiaries of the projects and the interventionist agencies, which need to be reinforced through collaboration at the stage of entry or site visit by the contractors.

In another expression, too much focus is placed on the Niger Delta Development Commission as an intervention institution but it is recalled that government also vested power of developing the Niger Delta Areas with funding to the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs as well as the Presidential Amnesty Program and the Niger Delta Development Basin Authority with mandates to transform the oil rich region. The multinational oil corporations operating in the region have made remarkable impacts provided because they are the main Actors and beneficiary of the natural resources endowed in the area. They should work in partnership with government and other relevant organizations to develop the host communities through corporate social responsibility.

Recommendations

Based on all the issues raised in the course of this research work as they affect the Niger Delta region and challenges discovered, it is important to make salient recommendations as follows:

(a) Improved Coordination and Collaboration:

To bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, there should be enhanced coordination, synergy, and collaboration among various government agencies and stakeholders. Establishing a unified platform or committee involving representatives from the



Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, NDDC, and other relevant agencies can facilitate better coordination and alignment of efforts towards the development of the Niger Delta region.

(b) Institutional Reforms and Enhanced Transparency:

For the NDDC to effectively execute its mandate, there is an urgent need for institutional reforms to address allegations of corruption and mismanagement. This could involve:

- i. Strengthening internal control mechanisms and governance structures.
- ii. Implementing stringent anti-corruption measures and establishing an independent oversight body to monitor the commission's activities.
- iii. Enhancing transparency through regular publication of financial reports, project updates, and beneficiary lists.

(c) Community Engagement and Stakeholder Participation:

Engaging with local communities and stakeholders is crucial for the success of development interventions in the Niger Delta region. This can be achieved by:

- i. Conducting regular community consultations and needs assessments to identify priority areas and development projects.
- ii. Involving local communities in decision-making processes and project implementation to ensure inclusivity and ownership.
- iii. Promoting awareness and educating communities about government programs, eligibility criteria, and application processes to enhance participation and reduce disparities.

(d) Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reform:

To ensure the effectiveness of intervention agencies like the NDDC and PAP, there should be continuous monitoring, evaluation, and reform to align with the evolving needs and priorities of the Niger Delta region. This involves:

- i. Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact, efficiency, and sustainability of development projects and programs.
- ii. Implementing feedback mechanisms to gather insights from beneficiaries and stakeholders for informed decision-making and improvement.
- iii. Regularly reviewing and updating policies, strategies, and intervention mechanisms based on evaluation findings and changing socio-economic conditions.



(e) Transparency and Inclusivity in Beneficiary Selection Process:

To address criticisms regarding the transparency and inclusivity of the Presidential Amnesty Program's beneficiary selection process:

- i. Implementing a transparent and merit-based selection criteria that considers the needs and aspirations of all communities within the Niger Delta region.
- ii. Conducting awareness campaigns and outreach programs to ensure that information about the program reaches all eligible beneficiaries, particularly those in remote and marginalized areas.
- iii. Establishing a grievance redress mechanism to address concerns and complaints related to the beneficiary selection process and program implementation.

While the Federal Government's efforts to address the developmental challenges in the Niger Delta region through specialized ministries and agencies are commendable, there is a need for critical examination and enhancement of these interventions to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. By implementing the suggested solutions, the government can foster improved coordination, transparency, community engagement, and continuous improvement, thereby promoting meaningful and inclusive development in the Niger Delta region.

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