

Reforms of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs

Problem

Nigeria largely depends on oil income, taxes and royalties paid by transnational oil companies and on profits gained from its equity stakes in those companies' investment. Oil products accounts for about 80% of Nigerian Government revenues, 95% of export receipts and 90% of foreign exchange. The Niger-Delta alone accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's oil revenue. The first oil was successfully drilled from the region by the Anglo Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Company in 1956. Since then the Niger Delta region, which is made up of the oil producing States of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers States has become riddled with development crisis consequent upon environmental changes, land degradation, destruction of aqua-culture, conflict, poverty, growing segment of disenchanting populace, and the consequence of youth restiveness and militia upsurge. Such bodies as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Egbesu Youth, and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), were all seen to typify southern minority responses to environmental degradation, political marginalization, and economic underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Environment experts say the damage done to the Niger Delta Region fragile natural environment and to the health of the people was due largely to uncontrolled exploration and exploitation of crude oil and natural gas, which has led to numerous spills, gas flaring, and the opening up of the forests to loggers, indiscriminate canalizations, flooding; and coastal erosion and earth tremor.

A careful study of events since the discovery of oil in the region up to the return of democratic governance show that successive governments from military rule to democratic government neglected the region. However, by the return of democratic governance in 1999, and well into the Obasanjo administration, the agitation of the people of the region reached alarming proportion, which culminated in unprecedented level of insecurity of lives and property. Not only that, the crisis in the region brought about dwindling economic fortunes in the country as it crippled oil exploration activities in the region, on account of serial premeditated attacks launched on the equipment and installations belonging to major multi-national oil firms operating in the region. Oil production in the region reduced to an all-time low of 700,000 barrels per day, a development that crippled the running of affairs of the government since crude oil exportation is the mainstay of the nation's economy. Between 2005 and 2009, about 25%-40% of Nigeria's oil production and exports were forcefully shut down.

Reform Initiatives

In order to respond to the development needs of the communities and people of the Niger Delta, the Obasanjo administration established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 with the sole mandate of developing the oil-rich Niger Delta region. The Musa Yar'Ádua administration introduced the amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants to curb their militancy and the restless youths of the region. To address the prevalent problems in the region, President Umaru Yar'Ádua further established the

Ministry of the Niger Delta Ministry in September 2008, with the Niger Delta Development Commission becoming a Parastatal under the Ministry. As a demonstration of YarÁdua administration commitment to ensuring a lasting peace in the region, the President included the Niger-Delta in his Seven-Point Agenda. The mandate of the Ministry of Niger Delta is to fast-track development in the region by coordinating the activities of government agencies, international partners and stakeholders. The establishment of the Ministry of Niger-Delta and the proclamation of the amnesty programme have in no small measure contributed to the relative peace presently being enjoyed in the region which has led to the increase in oil output from 700,000 bpd at the height of the restiveness in the region to over 2.5 million bpd.

Main Achievements

The establishment of the Ministry of the Niger-Delta and the proclamation of the amnesty programme have in no small measure contributed to the relative peace presently being enjoyed in the region which has led to the increase in oil output from 700,000 bpd at the height of the restiveness in the region to over 2.5 million bpd before the recent slump in oil prices.

The Jonathan administration has successfully sustained the amnesty programme. A total of 5,204 ex-militants are undergoing various forms of skills acquisition training programme or formal education in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The career choices selected by the delegates range from marine, heavy duty operations, welding, agriculture, boat building, oil and gas technics, entrepreneurships, automobile technology and aviation, etc.

In the area of infrastructural development, the Jonathan administration through the NDDC and other intervention agencies has provided good roads and bridges which link the adjoining communities of the area. This has led to improvement of trade and social activities among members of the various communities

Other achievement in the Niger-Delta include:

- Development of Agricultural Programmers (crop, livestock, fisheries etc.);
- Construction of housing units in each of the nine Niger Delta states;
- Construction of Skills Acquisition Centers in the 9 states of the Niger-Delta;
- Land Reclamation, shoreline protection and flood/erosion control in the region;
- Remediation and rehabilitation of oil polluted sites in the nine (9) states of Niger delta region; and
- The establishment of the Ministry of Niger-Delta has provided opportunities to a number of unemployed youths in the country.

Key Challenges

- Inadequate provision for funds in the budget. The budgetary allocations to the Ministry from its inception in 2009 was N96bn, from which N94bn was released. In 2010, the Federal Government released N58.8bn out of N145.2bn for project execution. The availability of funds to take care of pressing projects in the Niger Delta was marked by further reduction, as the Finance Ministry could only release N35.6bn out of N58bn budgeted for 2011

- Inadequate coordination between the Ministry and agencies responsible for the development of the region.
- Late and inadequate release of funds for programs/projects implementation
- Security;
- Community clashes;
- Youth restiveness, and
- Oil spillages in the region

Assessment of Reform Initiatives

S/N	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	RESULT OF ASSESSMENT
1	Have the reforms improved the quality and quantity of the public services delivered?	Yes, internally in the Ministry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Procurement process has entrenched transparency and accountability · Performance contract using Key Performance Indicators (KPI) especially at top Management level · Monitoring and Evaluation(M&E) by PRS Department · Regular Departmental/ Management meetings · Restructuring of the Departments for streamlining of schedules · Waiver to employ Niger Delta indigenes to enhance community participation and ownership of projects.
2	Do more people now have access to services, including disadvantaged groups such as women, young persons and people with disabilities?	Yes, through the empowerment programmes and conflict resolution by the Ministry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Non Militant Youth Programmes (Skill Acquisition) to provide skill training · Mediation in conflict resolution between communities and among youth groups.
3	Have the reforms reduced the cost of governance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integrated Payroll system (IPPIS) has eliminated ghost workers · Monitisation of benefits: transport, housing, · Outsourcing non-essential services e.g. security, cleaning etc

S/N	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	RESULT OF ASSESSMENT
4	Have the reforms made the service more affordable for citizens?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Possible Public Private Partnership (PPP) to projects implementation · Multi-Stakeholder Fund to financing projects being proposed
5	Have the reforms reduced corruption?	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Recent sensitization on asset Declaration by Code of Conduct Bureau · IPPIS has drastically reduced ghost workers · Procurement process has entrenched transparency and accountability in service.
6	Have the reforms reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Freedom of Information(FOI) Act · Servicom Charter outlaws delay treatment of files beyond 24hours · Management Meetings to keep key officers informed about Management decisions
7	Are the reform initiatives likely to lead to improved development outcomes?	<p>Yes. Reform initiatives likely to lead to improved development outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Restructuring of the Ministry - streamlined schedules to Department · Effective coordination of state offices for project and program implementation · Effective coordination of state offices for project and programme implementation · Employment of indigenes enhanced acceptability of Ministry Programmes/Projects by communities · Monitoring and Evaluation(M&E) ensure impact of programmes and projects in the region · Bridging funding gap through setting up of Multi-stakeholder Fund. · Capacity building of staff to handle their schedules effectively and efficiently

S/N	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	RESULT OF ASSESSMENT
8	Are things improving, staying the same, or getting worse?	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Reduction in youth restiveness as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Skills acquisition programmes · Continuous mediation in crises ii. Infrastructure development in the region
9	Where things are improving, will those improvements endure?	Yes, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sustained funding · Timely release of funds(budget)
10	Where things are not improving, what should be done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Constant Monitoring and Evaluation · Timely budget release · Community/Partnership/Stake holders meeting · Capacity building · Conducive working environment

Proposed Next Steps

- The Ministry should key into the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan facilitated by the Niger Delta Development Commission [NDDC]. The Master Plan has been widely acclaimed as a worthy compass for the rapid development of the region. The roadmap is a product of elaborate and intensive collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in the Niger Delta. Although the NDDC facilitated its production, it was, indeed, a product of all the stakeholders who spent over four years jointly in putting it together. That explains why the ministry should galvanise all the concerned parties to sincerely buy into its implementation.
- Implement the key recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Report to clean Ogoniland and other communities affected by oil spills in the Niger-Delta
- There is need for the Ministry to be well-funded considering the historical and strategic value of the Ministry. The Ministry should have a special budget with a fixed percentage derived from the total allocation to the Federal Government. Priority should be accorded to the completion of the East West Road, which is meant to link communities in the region and nine skill acquisition canter in the nine states under the Niger Delta Development Commission; and

There is need for collaboration and synergy in the development of Niger Delta region between the Ministry and agencies saddled with the responsibility for developing the

region through the harmonization of programmes and projects with a view to achieving a faster and wholesome development of the region.