

Research Proposal: Niger Delta Renaissance



Building Sustainable Partnerships for Peace, Social Inclusion
and Accelerated Development in the Niger Delta

By

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And

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Preamble

The history of the current tension in the Niger Delta has its roots in the discovery and exploitation of Oil and Gas in the area over the last four decades. During the period before the 1970s over 70% of Nigeria's national income came from agriculture before Oil came into the national economy equation. At the time, while the rest of the country was contributing various products (Groundnut pyramids in the North, Cocoa in the West, and Cassava in the East) to the national food basket, the Niger Delta contributed Rubber, Oil Palm, Fish and Shrimp.

The sustained Oil Exploration and Exploitation activities (especially in relation to health and safety threats from spillage) in the area however were not monitored strictly, and the Oil companies continued to mismanage the effects of Oil spills and thereby leaving the marine life barren. The main stay of the Niger Delta economy used to be fishing and with the loss of the revenue resulting from aquatic life decay, the people were left with no alternative than to seek their future in Oil. Unfortunately, the past leadership thought otherwise, and left the area in neglect. There were some efforts to intervene but with poor management, those efforts had limited impact.

The youth and people of the Niger Delta continued to watch helplessly as their land was systematically depleted with no commensurate compensation for the loss of income from their traditional fish farming. Even basic facilities such as Roads, Electricity and Portable Water were not provided. Little wonder the youth are now up-in-arms. The importance of restoring peace to the Niger Delta cannot be over-emphasised given the proportion of the National income (over 90%) generated from the drilling activities in the area.

1.2 Progressive Government Efforts to Address Challenges in the Niger Delta

The Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), established in 1992 and 2000 respectively, together represent past governments' efforts to intervene in the Niger Delta.

OMPADEC and NDDC have been linked with a lot of controversy and mismanagement of funds that were meant for the development of the region. The commissions have a record of being in the middle of political maneuvers that act as hindrances to their ability to deliver on their mandates.

Any meaningful intervention in the area must now be an all-stakeholder affair, that is, involving Government-federal, state, and Local; Civil Society; Academia; and the people of the Niger Delta. Consensus building is the key. It may be helpful to escalate the management of the Niger Delta Renaissance to a global level, in other words, international development partners should be engaged to act as mediators, moderators, supporters and project managers. It may be worthy to mention that developments in the area have affected the world price of Oil and caused uncertainties about world supply. It is against this backdrop that international intervention is being recommended.

1.3 President Yar'Adua Government Strategic Resolve and the Role of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs

The Present Government in recognition of the gravity of the situation has declared the development of the Niger Delta as a National Priority. Indeed the Government's 7-point agenda includes the Niger Delta.

To underscore the foregoing, the government has established a Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. The Ministry has already commenced activities in earnest, calling for consultants to assist with the planning and programming of intervention programs in a recent newspaper publication of Request for Proposals (RFPs).

The immediate challenge facing the Ministry will be how to manage or supervise the highly political NDDC and ensure synergy in their activities.

1.4 Impact of the Conflict in the Niger Delta on World Oil Prices and the Global Financial Crisis

The Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) is one of the main resistance groups. Their Declaration of war on the Federal Government of Nigeria and demands that all oil companies evacuate their personnel from the Niger Delta or prepare to engage in armed combat, affected global Oil Prices in 2004 with price increases above the \$50 per barrel mark.

By 2005, when the leader of NDPVF was arrested, the activities of the militia heightened with further threats on the Oil Industry and the Nigerian State. A new organization: the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) emerged. The year 2006 began to witness a new wave of violence involving kidnappings of Oil Industry workers and serious battles between the state security services and militia groups. The more recent outcome of the violence has been major loss of lives as the military were called in to attempt to curb the militancy, and a significant impact on world oil prices locking in about 900,000 bpd and sending the global Oil prices beyond \$140 per barrel in July 2008; a situation which may have exacerbated the global financial crisis. An estimated death toll of over 1500 deaths a year clearly places the Niger Delta alongside Chechnya and Colombia in the same UN category.

1.5 Intervening in the Niger Delta to ensure Peace and Development in the area

The aim of this work is to explore the various options open to the Nigerian authorities through a series of consensus-building workshops to address the problems of the Niger Delta from an all-inclusive stakeholder perspective.

The research has two targets, first to establish the main issues leading to the conflicts and the failed attempts at resolving them. The second target is to propose a more robust approach for addressing the conflicts through participatory dialogues and collaborative multi-stakeholder partnership development programs for ensuring sustainable peace in the area (See about the use of System Dynamics in Section 5 below).

2.0 Project Description/Field-work outline

2.1 Way forward for ensuring lasting Peace in the Niger Delta

The aim of this doctoral research work is to propose a remedy to ensure a Niger Delta Renaissance, by

- Identifying Stakeholders and Goals
- Designing Intervention Models
- Establishing Project Deliverables, Timelines and Budgets
- Identifying Global Partnership Opportunities for Development
- Developing a Prescriptive Model for Selecting Partnership Strategy

A logical first step is to organise a series of Stakeholder Conferences/Workshops to:

- Build Consensus on Vision, Mission and Goals
- Further identify and specify some “quick fixes” and high impact pilot projects for immediate deployment.
- Identify potential partners for medium to long-term intervention initiatives.
- Prioritize some potential Projects for immediate consideration such as:
 - Wireless Broadband/Mobile WiMAX (Wibro, Korea)
 - Multi-Purpose Tele-Centres (Zinox Virtual PCs)

The second step will be for Government to Select Strategic Partners:

- Consulting Partner/Program manager (Academia), for example:
 - Centre for International Conflict Resolution (CICR)
 - Center for International Earth Science Information at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University
 - Millennium Institute, which is already working on the construction of SD models of national economy for 15 countries of ECOWAS – starting with Nigeria – this may become a part of environmental peace gaming of Polytechnic Institute of New York University.
 - Global University System (GUS).
 - United Nations University-International Institute Of Software Technology
- International Agency lead partner (Funding)
 - United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- Private Sector Lead Partner (CSR Consideration)
 - Zinox Technologies Limited (ICT lead Partner)
 - Shell Nigeria (Oil Industry Lead Partner)
- Niger Delta Community representatives
- Civil Society (NGOs, CBOs, etc.)
 - Rosemary Taribi Foundation (Coordinating Charity)

2.2 Stakeholder Forum/Steering Committee

In the past, arrangements involving stakeholders have been less formal involving non-standing committees. It is the opinion of the author that for ensuring lasting peace in the area, there is a desperate need for a standing and representative stakeholder Forum/Steering Committee for promoting, consolidating and managing Consensus Building. The committee should comprise the people of the Niger Delta, Government, Civil Society, Private Sector (primarily, Oil and Gas), International Development Community, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), etc.

The idea is that if the various issues are raised at such a forum and addressed by all the parties, it is unlikely that when an agreement has been met collectively, any move by dissidents will be receiving any wide support. The likelihood is that such attempts will be resisted even by the youth themselves.

2.3 Establish Realistic Goals: Lasting Peace; Value Re-orientation; Social Inclusion; Participatory Dialogue and Engagement; Robust Infrastructure, Human Capacity, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development.

Create the right environment to promote Peace

As suggested earlier, the existence of a standing forum automatically ensures that grievances can be addressed collectively before they escalate to unmanageable proportions.

The government at local, state, and federal levels should maintain an open door policy with an avenue for reporting grievances. The Oil companies should be encouraged to promote programs that endear them to the communities within which they operate. Such programs should be recognized with awards of excellence by government.

Actively promote Participatory Dialogue and Engagement

Continuous engagement and dialogue to review progress of integration within the operating communities with government as a referee must be encouraged. When issues cannot be handled between the erring companies and the communities then government can intervene as mediator and chief negotiator.

Provide incentives to catalyse Value Re-orientation

The government and operating companies should plan programs and activities that would reward 'laying down of arms' and encourage value re-orientation. It may be helpful to set up centres of excellence for talent contests and development. For example, develop programs like Music and Acting (to feed the Nigerian Movie Industry-Noliwood) talent discovery. Entrepreneurship development is another approach to positively rehabilitate and re-engage the youth.

Social Inclusion must be the guiding principle for good governance

Government needs to design intervention programs to empower the most disadvantaged in the communities. Women and the youth from extremely poor homes deserve opportunities for fighting poverty. Inability to meet basic needs drive people to desperation.

The social inclusion programs must be planned by an all-stakeholder engagement process. The target beneficiaries need to participate in crafting activities and programs that would significantly change their indigent lot.

Provide Robust enabling Infrastructure (ICT and Traditional Infrastructure).

ICT has become established globally as an enabler, enhancer, and empowerment opportunities provider, poverty eradicator, to mention some of its unique qualities. Unlike traditional Infrastructure, which is by no means avoidable, or indeed constitutes necessary conditions for economic progress, ICT has a pervasive impact on performance in all sectors of an economy. It acts as a catalyst, efficiency driver, and multiplier. The Niger Delta is overdue for good roads, reliable power, and portable water. However, the need for a high speed wireless internet infrastructure (infra), such as Korea's Wibro (because of the marshy terrain) cannot be over-emphasised. E-Government, E-Health, E-Education (and E-learning), E-Agriculture,

E-Talents Development, VOIP, and IPTV all become possible in the area. Of particular advantage will be the reduction in the risk of physical commuting within the area and thus exposure to various forms of aggressive activities by the dissident few. Stakeholder meetings can be held via video-conferencing. Negotiations and peace-building programs will be enhanced as well without physical engagement.

Promote good Healthcare and Develop Human Capacity for the digital era

Following from the implementation of reliable ICT infra, in addition to existing healthcare centers, access to high speed internet will offer opportunities for improved medical care from electronic links to medical experts, their location becoming less of a hindrance.

As mentioned earlier, Human capacity building takes a whole new dimension. Access to the Global Open University Initiative (through GUS/Nigeria) and a host of non-profit E-Educational and E-learning initiatives (such as the Cisco Networking Academy Online Curriculum and the new University of the People Initiative) becomes a reality.

Aggressively promote Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development in alignment with local, national, regional and global development goals.

Education and Training without Entrepreneurship development cannot be expected to give a profound effect on eradicating poverty. A strategic plan to develop local entrepreneurs beyond just job skills development is paramount. ICT again offers a wide latitude for small and medium sized enterprise development through hardware support services, Network Management, Software development, Outsourcing services, and probably the most important being local content development.

Build partnerships for sustainable development crafted in line with the goals of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), World Summit on the information Society (WSIS), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (as well as Public Private Partnerships) have continued to gain momentum as the way forward in infrastructure provision and poverty eradication in developing countries. It is therefore not surprising that the 8th Millennium Development Goal is to "Develop a Global Partnership for Development".

All activities and programs of intervention in the Niger Delta must by induction be based on a multi-stakeholder (or indeed all-stakeholder) strategy.

Ensure responsible environmental management by the Oil and Gas operators.

The Oil and Gas Operators need to exercise care, caution and show commitment in the prevention and handling of Oil Spillage and associated hazards in the business of Oil exploration and production.

Even when spills unavoidably occur, actually involving the local communities in the cleaning-up exercise is probably the wisest choice to make. It empowers them economically, and gives them a chance to work closely with the erring operator.

2.4 Field-work Outline

The work-plan is to:

- Hold preliminary fact-finding meetings with Government Authorities in Abuja (July 2009)

- Hold follow-up meetings with representatives of the other stakeholder groups to promote the need for an all-inclusive stakeholders' conference/workshop (August 2009)
- Organize a conference/workshop in Abuja to bring the various stakeholders together to discuss and agree the current intervention plan and to synchronize with existing programs (December 2009/January 2010)
- Produce a Program/Projects Document Outlining the details of the Intervention Programs, the delivery partners, and timelines for completion (June 2010).

3.0 Rationale

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation at 140 million people from 2006 official census figures. The nation's economy has gone from 75% agrarian to 95% Oil and Gas, in a span of just over 30 years. The first Oil Refinery was built in 1966 at Alesa Eleme in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, but it was not until the late 1970s that Oil began to surge to prominence in the national economy equation.

The unrest in the Niger Delta is doubtlessly a threat to the nation's economic survival. It has ground many national projects to a halt as a result of heavy losses in Oil revenue, the main source of national income. The situation in the Niger Delta has its roots dating back to over 40 years of neglect of the people of the Delta in the face of serious damages to aquatic life, their main sustenance for livelihood, resulting from Oil Spillages. This is further compounded by the huge gap in the level of infrastructure and services prevalent between the Oil producing areas and the rest of the country with little or no contribution to national income. Of particular reference is the gulf between Abuja, the nation's capital which was built with Oil wealth and the Oil producing cities.

Previous Government efforts to address the problems have been undermined by recorded cases of widespread corruption and gross mismanagement of resources allocated from the national budget for special intervention initiatives.

As mentioned in section 1.4 earlier, the Energy situation may require a more futuristic view to when Oil becomes a much less sought after Energy source. The diversification of the economy of the United Arab Emirates (Sheikh Mohammad of Dubai in particular) has been as it were, reflecting on Former Vice President and Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr. Al Gore recent proposal to replace fossil fuel with renewable one to generate electricity in the USA in ten years <<http://tinyurl.com/66sk9d>>. Would this be a viable direction? If so, what would be the consequences to other economic and social structures in the US and in other countries, particularly Nigeria? <<http://tinyurl.com/dj54lt>>. The serious consequences of Al Gore/Obama's energy policy proposals, upon the export of oil from Nigeria, and hence reduction of oil revenue would be at best unheralded if plans and efforts are not put into action to prevent the anticipated economic challenges of over-reliance on Oil.

4.0 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are among others, to:

- Explore a consensus approach among stakeholders to identify the best path to peace-building in the Niger Delta.
- methodically review the current state of affairs in the Niger Delta Region in relation to level of threat to national security and stability
- catalogue previous and current efforts at intervention in the Niger Delta
- Attempt to determine the main causes of failure of past attempts and Success factors where some gains have been achieved.
- Propose a robust partnership selection strategy for sustainable intervention programs.

5.0 Methodologies

Data will be collected by adopting a mixture of Personal Interviews, Manual (administered at Conference Venue) and On-line Surveys, and Conference Presentations from Stakeholders.

System Dynamics methodology will be used for Stakeholder Dynamics Analysis while Analytical Hierarchy Process will be used for projects selection based on agreed criteria. Value Measuring Methodology (VMM) will be used for ensuring that projects meet the mixed benefit criteria/goals of partnerships.

System Dynamics Methodology and its embedded cause-and-effect analysis approach is particularly suited to studies on consensus building with rational analysis and critical thinking based on "facts and figures" – which is especially needed for the education of the young would-be decision makers who would face severe conflict resolutions in the coming 2050 when many of Millennium Development Goals of the UN would not meet with its goals. The cause-and-effect analysis will foster understanding of inter-relatedness and interdependencies among various social factors/stakeholders.

6.0 Outputs/Outcomes

The expected results from this research effort are:

- A communiqué from the conference/workshop highlighting all the issues addressed and the way forward in resolving issues still needing attention.
- Data collection from survey questionnaires to be administered at the workshop venue (December 2009/January 2010)
- Online Quarterly Peace Process Performance/Progress Surveys to be hosted on the National Information Technology Development Agency Portal (Commencing January 2010)
- Intervention Programs/projects Planning and Implementation Guide (March 2010)
- Prescriptive Framework and Process Model for Selecting Partnership Strategy (March 2010)

7.0 Challenges

Several challenges are envisaged in the process of organizing the workshop and encouraging high turnout and motivating participants.

- There is a long established mutual distrust between the warring militants and the government
- Some Politicians have used the intervention platforms for personal and/or collective gain
- The conflict is compounded by involvement of miscreants who do not have the good of the Niger Delta people as their primary motive but self enrichment.
- The attitude of the Oil operators has been far from encouraging, preferring to engage the militants in a confrontational manner with the help of security operatives rather than dialogue with them in a peaceful manner.
- Notwithstanding the above challenges, the offer of the federal government of amnesty to the militants who lay down their arms, and more recently, the promise to release a prominent leader of the militants have all contributed to a conducive environment for consensus-driven intervention.