

RE-ENGINEERING THE NDDC'S MASTER PLAN: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)'s master plan, which promised different programmes such as: employment generation, education, and health, among others. The authors reviewed competing analysis of the extant development policies and conclude that the NDDC's master plan is not radically different from the extant policies and may aggravate the antimonies to development in the region. If lasting solution to the lingering crisis in the Niger Delta is desired, it is essential to positively utilize combined powers of local organizations. Ultimately, rather than romancing with military and political approaches that have not engendered sustainable development, the people who live with and whose lives are directly affected by the Niger Delta crisis should be reckoned with in arresting the crisis and positively transforming the region.

Key Words: Development, Master Plan, Niger Delta, Social Movement

INTRODUCTION

As we launch the master plan today, it is my abiding belief that we are also launching the commencement of a voyage of hope that will sail the Niger Delta past a legacy of turbulence, neglect and poverty into an assured future as our nation's most peaceful, most prosperous and most ecologically regenerative region by 2020 (President Olusegun Obasanjo).

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) designed different development programmes described as 'Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan' (the Master Plan, for short) but its ability to restore order in the region appears fuzzy. NDDC is a Federal Government Agency initiated in 2000 with a framework for developing the region (Dafinone, 2007; Okereke, 2007). Applauding the NDDC may be unproductive and misleading without considering its capacities for entrenching practical legacy of excellent implementation of projects and positive transformation needed in the region. Several problems, such as political influences, corruption, and underlying structural problems (Omotola, 2007) as well as identity-based social movements confront NDDC operations and make projects implementation difficult.

The rising spate of intensely volatile resistance and militant insurrection in the region seemingly negate the euphoria of the NDDC's potential achievements. For instance, on the 1st of January 2008, over 10 people, including four police officers, died during militants' coordinated assaults on two police stations, a hostel, and a restaurant (Polygreen, 2008) in Port Harcourt (a major city in the Niger Delta). The ongoing resource control crisis and militant warfare with sophisticated weaponry in confrontation against the state security forces give an impression that NDDC is either not communally acceptable or has not addressed the core of the Niger Delta problems. What has the NDDC done about the lingering insurgency in the Niger Delta and how can it influence the living standards of the underprivileged in the region?

This paper is concerned with analyzing the interplay between the NDDC and the Niger Delta social structure in the analysis of socio-economic construction of militancy as a counterforce against state controlled development planning. Obviously, a vibrant wing has emerged in the communal struggle for the Niger Delta development due to the failure of the Nigerian state to eradicate the prolonged problems

in the region and other factors yet to be accurately discerned. This emergence represents the localized negotiation mechanism and opportunities expansion in responding to lingering collective problems. Against the above background, this paper provides a distillation of different debates on the state responses to underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. It begins with an analysis of background and implications of extant policies for development of the Niger Delta. It then analyzes the NDDC and its master plan. Finally, it presents gaps in a discourse of problems and prospects of NDDC as it seeks to contribute to the fulfillment of its master plan.

EXTANT POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGER DELTA

The Niger Delta with an estimated population of about 30 million people is famous in Africa due to its geographical location and remarkable oil revenue, which accounts for about 96 percent of Nigeria's foreign earning (Agbu, 2005; Jike, 2005). The region has gained international limelight since the 15th century following the arrival of Portuguese explorers in its kingdoms, such as Bonny, Warri, and Benin in Rivers, Delta, and Edo States, respectively. Community interaction with the explorers showed that collective actions and social movements have been established in the region. The Niger Delta people were vocal in the resistance against colonialism and during the struggle for Nigeria's independence. For instance, in the affairs of the Igbo-led Eastern Region, the Ijaws challenged their marginalisation and demanded for infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, schools, and health institutions.

Despite several demands, however, inadequate infrastructure remains a major problem in the Niger Delta. For example, the average number of health facilities and primary health centres in the Niger Delta were 296 and 271, respectively, which were far lower than the national averages of 395 and 370. Also while the average number of public primary school in the region was 956, that of the average national figure was 1,371 (National Bureau of Statistics-NBS, 2006).

The logic of recurrent agitations, violence and militia movements derives from the lingering deprivation of people in the region. Major Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw youth from Kiama, led the foremost Niger Delta attempt to secede from Nigeria in 1966 (Omoweh, 2003; Akinwumi, 2004). The secession movement was driven by renewed interests in the negotiation for the development of Nigeria Delta as provided for in various documents. During various constitutional conferences prior to 1960 when Britain officially granted Nigeria political independence, the Niger Delta was recognised as an area for special

development. The pre-independence constitution provided a special right for areas with oil/gas resources and spelt out that 50% of the royalty derived from oil/gas exploration should be paid to oil/gas producing areas.

Subsequently, Nigerian governments modified the constitutional provisions, discontinued royalty payments, and adopted the derivation principle for revenue allocation to oil/gas producing areas. The 50% derivation principle adopted after the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) was dropped to 1.5%, 3%, until it was increased to its current rate of 13% after much debate (Dafinone, 2007). The motion for increasing the current rate of revenue allocation to the Niger Delta was a major factor that led to the abrogation of the Nigerian National Conference (Confab) of 2005. The Confab-like existing state actions failed to address the fundamental issues of nation building in Nigeria where different development agencies, such as the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961, the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, and the NDDC in 2000 have been established.

The OMPADEC was expected to mediate between the oil companies and the communities, as well as receive and administer the monthly allocation from the federation account in accordance with confirmed oil–production ratio in each state of the Niger Delta (Osuntawa and Nwilo 2005; Okonta, 2006; Sanya, 2006). The OMPADEC performed unsatisfactorily as it only provided electricity and pipe-borne water to some villages, while most of its funds were misappropriated. A major limitation of OMPADEC was corruption, which was so entrenched that in quick succession its first two sole administrators, Albert K. Horsfall and Professor Eric Opia, were dismissed. Opia was removed in September 1998 for his inability to account for N6.7 billion, then worth about U.S. \$80 million (Frynas 2001:38). Opia allegedly embezzled \$200 million (Okonta, 2006; Sanya, 2006).

The poor performance of OMPADEC could be attributed to insufficient regulatory mechanisms to monitor its activities. In the first three years of its establishment, OMPADEC commenced projects worth \$500 million, but the bulk of the money was said to have been paid to contractors whose addresses could not be traced (Sanya, 2006). Other major problems that confronted the OMPADEC included the inadequate funds and its eventual politicization. The federal government reportedly withheld about N41 billion due to the commission. Politically, the federal government reorganized the commission three

times and replaced its Director (Opia from Delta State) with an Assistant Inspector General of Police (Alhaji Bukar Ali from Northern Nigeria) (Omotola, 2007).

The failure of the OMPADEC to significantly contribute towards the development of the Niger Delta served as motivation in the search for alternative institutional measures resulting in the establishment of the NDDC. Similarly, some Niger Delta States established different development agencies such, as River Basin Development Authorities, Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), and Delta State Oil-Producing Development Commission (DESOPADEC). Some Nigerian governments provided substantial financial resources for various development agencies to tackle underdevelopment in the Niger Delta (Frynas, 2001; Agbu, 2005) but many of the agencies became moribund and socio-economic situations in the Niger Delta remain deplorable.

The state of the Niger Delta infrastructure (roads, pipe-borne water, and health facilities) remains poor (Agbu, 2005; Jike, 2005). This situation depicts flaws in extant responses towards the development of the Niger Delta and provides justification for the rising spate of agitations for resource control. A recent study (Omotola, 2007:78) describes thus:

The most threatening dimension of the agitation is the resort to violence, most often where peaceful means have failed, and at times as a response to governmental repression. Some of the people's approaches have included outright seizure of oil wells, kidnapping of oil workers, violent demonstrations, and direct confrontation with the state and its agent, the oil multinationals. The famous Ogoni uprising, spearheaded by Ken Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people remains legendary.

Agitations have become popular strategies in negotiating for state social welfare in the Niger Delta. In 1958, the Colonial Office in London inaugurated a commission led by Sir Henry Willinks to study the minority (Niger Delta) grievances and make recommendations. However, the commission hardly contemplated the centrality of oil to the Nigerian economy. As the Niger Delta people witnessed the ascendancy of crude oil to the centrality of the Nigerian economy, they became more sensitive of their deprivation and restless in their demands for resource control. For instance, the Ijaw became more militant in the 1970s and 1980s due to special circumstances, such as enormity of environmental degradation and ethnic alliance with few powerful representatives in the higher echelons of the Nigerian polity.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the tempo of the Niger Delta crises spread as the youth in the area became increasingly displeased. In 1994, the Ijaw National Congress (INC) was formed to rearticulate the grievances of the Niger Delta people but the Nigerian government and Multi-national Oil Corporations (MOC) frowned at such initiative. In 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) was formed as an arm of INC through “Kaiama Declaration”, which contains principles of equity and justice. Kaiama is the birthplace of an Ijaw hero, Isaac Adaka Boro. A key component of the Kaiama Declaration states thus:

All land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to the Ijaw communities and are the basis of our survival... We cease to recognise all undemocratic decrees that rob our communities of the right to ownership and control of our lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent...it is our wish to remain part of the Nigerian family, but not in conditions that would undermine our survival and demean our humanity" (Barrett, 2008:18).

The above statements show a collective determination to wrestle resources control from the Nigerian state with calls for recognition and expression of willingness to remain part of Nigeria. Following the declaration, the spate of agitation and militancy increased in the Niger Delta. In 2001, the Nigerian National Assembly deliberated on a petition demanding US\$1.5bn as compensation and reparation for the environmental damage arising from the operations of Shell Petroleum Development Company in Ijaw land. The National Assembly ratified the Ijaw grievances and ordered Shell to pay the compensation. However, shell is yet to comply. Shell’s refusal to pay the compensation and rejection of the Nigerian government adopted military tactics are coterminous with rising spate of resistance in the Niger Delta.

Following the recommendations of key leaders from the Niger Delta, the Nigerian President (Olusegun Obasanjo) presented a Bill to the National Assembly for the establishment of NDDC to ensure peace and stability. The NDDC commenced operations from the offices of the defunct OMPADEC and launched a new master plan for the development of the Niger Delta. The master plan has been applauded. NDDC attracts funds from various sources, such as the Federal Government account, grants-in-aid from international agencies and statutory contributions from MOC and the Niger Delta states. However, some state governments and MOC have been reluctant to contribute towards meeting the level of funding needed for NDDC projects. Though the NDDC had mapped out development projects and constructed

new roads to remote communities, it has not been able to transform the region. Thus, the NDDC is yet to be the ultimate solution to the Niger Delta crises, which remain relatively high and more volatile.

THE NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NDDC)

NDDC was established in December 2000 following the federal government initiation of a master planning process for physical and social development to achieve speedy and global transformation of the Niger Delta into a zone of equity, prosperity, and tranquility (Emerhi, Kotschoubey, and Wolf, 2001). The Federal Government demonstrated renewed interests in the development of the region, which was made visible from President Obasanjo's speech earlier quoted at the very beginning (Okereke, 2007:2).

NDDC was constituted to serve the oil producing communities as a result of the lingering crises and abysmal performance of extant commissions in the region. In March 2001 NDDC requested for top development priorities of the Niger Delta states, which generally cut across nine states: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers (Barrett, 2008). These states can be grouped into the core and peripheral states of the Niger Delta. The core states of the Niger Delta are Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers, while others are referred to as peripheral. The oil and gas found in these states had become the stronghold of the Nigerian economy. Nigeria's position as the 8th largest producer of crude oil and the 5th largest reserves of natural gas is dependent on extraction of resources in the Niger Delta (Barrett, 2008). The NDDC Act states that:

the commission shall formulate policies and guidelines for the development of Niger Delta and conceive, plan, and implement projects capable of fostering sustainable development of the area in line with set rules and regulations. In doing these things, it would have access to contributions of each of its member states, and it would submit to the direction, control, or supervision of the president in performing its functions" (NDDC Act 1999: Section 7).

A "top-bottom" development initiative is obvious in the NDDC Act. Section 14 of the Act provides that all stakeholders in the Niger Delta areas and oil companies should help finance the NDDC. The Act mandates Federal Government to contribute to NDDC 15 percent of the total monthly statutory allocations due to the Niger Delta states from the federation account. The Act also mandates MOC, including gas-processing companies, operating onshore and offshore in the Niger Delta to pay 3 percent of their total annual budget to the commission (NDDC Act, 1999). These sources of fund give NDDC a

potentially strong capital base. However, without effective and efficient regulatory mechanisms, the reemergence of corruption would be a danger (NDDC, 2000). In Section 18, the Act states that the Nigerian President should present the NDDC’s annual budget to the National Assembly for approval and should keep a proper book of account, which must be audited at specified intervals. The Act empowers the president to appoint a monitoring committee to monitor the management of NDDC’s funds and projects (NDDC Act, 1999). The Act shows that NDDC could be at the whims and caprices of the president.

NDDC executed 810 projects in the Niger Delta between 2000 and 2003, as presented in Table 1.0. Despite the statistics, however, the Niger Delta crises remain as hinted below:

“The NDDC may not have lived up to its high billings after all, despite the number of projects it boasts of having commissioned and completed. Some of these official claims may be fictitious, exaggerated, or handled in manners inimical to the advancement of public interest—which is the amelioration of the people’s living conditions. The task of evaluating the performance and effectiveness of the NDDC presents us with a measurement dilemma. This is because there are no good independent studies of the effectiveness of NDDC projects, and so we must for now rely on the opinion of interested parties. To complicate matters, opinions are sharply divided regarding the effectiveness of the NDDC in discharging its responsibilities, and a large proportion of available views on the issue are negative. This explains why skepticism about project effectiveness is warranted” (Omotola, 2007: 82).

Table 1.0 NDDC Projects in the Niger Delta (2000-2003)

Type	2002	2003	Completed	Commissionable	Commissioned	Total
Building	402	15	316	275	138	417
Canalisation	9	9	0	0	0	18
Electrification	130	24	125	106	46	154
Flood Control	1	0	1	1	0	1
Jetty	41	6	32	31	11	47
Roads/Bridges	40	18	20	12	4	58
Water	91	24	76	70	21	115
Grand Total	714	96	570	495	220	810

Source: NDDC (2004b)

Unfortunately, like extant public policies, NDDC has not bequeathed significant improvement in the welfare of the Niger-Delta people. As presently constituted, the NDDC gives room for financial misappropriation given the allegations of corruption against it. If the situation continues unabated, social tension in the Niger Delta will continue (Saliu and Omotola, 2007) with the exploitative tendencies of multinational oil companies, which have partly orchestrated development enigma in the region and truncated the sustainability of the indigenous environment (Dike, 2004). This development issue is a strong factor fuelling the continuing crisis of youth restiveness and resistance against the Nigerian state.

THE NDDC'S MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan, which was designed by GTZ of Germany and patterned after Alaska and Alberta, was scheduled for implementation in different phases. The Master Plan, which is principally designed to develop rural communities and reduce rural-urban migration, is based on three 5-year phases, namely: the foundation phase (2006-2010); the expansion phase (2011-2015); and the consolidation phase (2016-2020) (Africa Research Bulletin, 2007; Barret, 2008). The broad based targets of The Master Plan (for which satellite mapping had been completed) cover the following aspects: demography; environment and hydrology; agriculture and aquaculture; biodiversity ; transport; rural, urban, regional planning and housing ; community development; governance and capacity development; education; health; small and medium enterprises (SMEs); water supply; energy (especially electricity); telecommunication; vocational training (for employment generation) ; waste management and sanitation ; large-scale industry; solid minerals; tourism; social welfare; arts, sports, and culture; women and youth employment; conflict prevention; access to financial instruments; and investment promotion.

In 2007, the Nigerian President (Umar Yar'Adua) endorsed The Master Plan as the policy framework for the Niger Delta Development. This gesture seems to settle the question of continuity. It is believed to be the first integrated development plan driven by stakeholders' participation in Nigeria. The plan covers different sectors including health, education, transportation, and agriculture, while its objectives embrace economic growth and infrastructural development. In particular, its major goal is to reduce poverty, induce industrialization, and ensure social economic transformation of the area. Thus, it is aimed at raising the people's living standard in accordance with the nation's 'Vision 2020' and the Millennium Development Goals-MDGs (Aigbokhan, 2007). Special road projects costing over N180 billion, new health facilities, and a full-fledged University of Petroleum Resources are listed in the

Master Plan. It is believed that the Master Plan would be the means of solving problems such as unemployment and violence, in the Niger Delta. It was estimated that \$50 billion (N6.4 trillion) would be required for the implementation of the Master Plan for 15 years (Babalola, 2008).

The effectiveness of the Master Plan depends on commitment from all stakeholders, especially the Federal Government, the Niger Delta states, and MOC. However, militia organisations like the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) alleged that NDDC awarded contracts to cronies contributing to abundance of 'white elephant' projects in the Niger Delta. Studies (Aroh, 2000; Egborge, 2000) showed the development of a Master Plan would require a comprehensive approach with strong considerations for traffic, river hydrology and morphology, environmental assessment, socio-economic impact, and institutional strengthening (a re-engineering). The capacity of the NDDC master plan in these areas has been disputed.

Problems and Prospects of the NDDC's Master Plan

Regrettably, NDDC has achieved very little. The Master Plan for the development of the Niger Delta was crafted by expatriate (GTZ of Germany) with the collaboration of few political elites and imposed on the Niger Delta people (Dafinone, 2007). Unlike the success stories of similar structures in Canada and the United States of America where special funds were provided from royalties for the development of Alberta and Alaska, respectively; the Nigerian NDDC Master Plan is retarded because the Commission formulates the policies, decides the contracts and to whom they are awarded, monitors their implementation, and equally pays the contractors themselves without any interference from any other party (Dafinone, 2007). Although the NDDC has generated services with improved accessibility, the broad consensus in the region favours empowerment, strengthened communal autonomy, and improvement in living standards (Barrett, 2008).

Unexpectedly, different militant gangs seem to have largely gained credibility in their struggle for liberation of the Niger Delta. Obviously, the NDDC has not shown capacities and strategies to address the lingering spate of militancy in the region. The future of the Niger Delta is dicey in light of current uncertainties. The outcomes of the rising militancy have attracted attentions worldwide. Different identity based social movements, including youth associations, 'area boys', militants, vigilantes, and cults, draw on repertoires of discourses and enter into hostile relations with state authorities and

agencies, including NDDC. These groups mobilize members for resource control and community development in response to the Nigerian 'politics of plunder', endemic since the beginning of the oil boom, but locally perceived as having intensified from the 1990s onwards (Gore and Pattern, 2003; Anoruo and Braha, 2005).

Insecurity arising from the activities of the social movements in the oil-rich Niger Delta has been a major drawback to the execution of NDDC projects. It remains an unavoidable risk and obvious hazard in the management of NDDC projects in spite of the Federal Government's efforts to ensure peace in the region. For example, a major oil company has purchased a high technology solution supplied by Blue Sky Network (a company in California) to help enhance the safety of its personnel and equipment (Okereke, 2007). A major problem militating against successful operations of NDDC is hostage taking. Cases of hostage taking are on the increase in the Niger Delta where some kidnapped foreigners and indigenes were forced to pay a huge amount of money as ransom. The increase in hostage taking has been attributed to government's military attacks against militant groups in the Niger Delta. A militant youth noted as follows: "our interest lies in how to bring the attention of everybody to the issue of the Niger Delta...to see physical development, both from the oil companies and the federal government" (Okereke, 2007:3).

Undesirable socio-economic situations in the Niger Delta have bred a frustrated population, ethnic polarization, communal suspicion, anti-establishment agitation, and hostility, all of which create instability and impede development. Basic amenities or infrastructure such, as good roads, safe drinking water, electricity, telecommunication, housing, transportation, health, and educational facilities are in short supply in the Niger Delta (Dafinone, 2007). The Niger Delta communities have been excluded in the management of the upstream and downstream operations of the oil industry through the Petroleum Act promulgated in 1969. Generally, the Niger Delta is under-represented in key sectors including the armed forces, the police, the customs, immigration, prison, and security services. A recent study captures the situation, thus:

Over 90% of the national revenue comes from sale of oil produced from the Niger Delta but the States and Local Governments in the region receive very little revenue allocation due to the unjust adoption and application of such principles as land mass, population, primary school enrolment and security as opposed to such other vital considerations as

water mass, ecological problems and difficulties associated with infrastructural and physical development in a swampy and marshy terrain like the Niger Delta” (Dafinone, 2007:3).

The actions of militants have adversely affected socio-economic development in Nigeria. For instance, some organisations have abandoned their productive activities in some areas due to insecurity and fear of militant groups. This abandonment has diminished volumes of oil production and lowered revenue generation from oil producing communities. Similarly, the power generation has been adversely affected. Despite government’s huge investment in the power supply failure to maintain and utilize the installed capacities of power generating plants and damages to oil and gas pipelines feeding power generating stations have resulted to astronomical rise in power outages in Nigeria. However, the Nigerian President Yar’Adua’s promise to declare a national "energy state of emergency” has not been fulfilled though the power situation has worsened. In contrast, one of the NDDC Directors revealed that a fundamental focus of the plan is quality education, which is the key to solving the Niger Delta unrest. The following quotation shows a comment about the Master Plan:

In so far as all stakeholders embrace it (the plan) and implement it, then we are going to see substantial improvement in the quality of education... This is very fundamental. A lot of things are tied around education, even unemployment is tied to quality education, conflict has some of its root in poor quality education, because people come out of school, they cannot get jobs and they cannot go back to farming, they find themselves in the middle of nowhere and they become ready recruits for militants...Details of the infrastructure that needs to be developed to deliver the plan will become known with time as the plan is implemented. In the mean time, it is hoped that the execution of the plan will bring to an end the neglect, poverty and the resultant unrest in this important area of the country” (Okereke, 2007:3).

The above statement contradicts findings of the recent studies showing that the vast foreign investments in the crude-oil and natural-gas (CONG) sectors have not resulted in significant benefits for most people in Nigeria where the government and multi-national companies have generated remarkable revenue from the sectors (Nwosu et al, 2006). Only minor contracts have been awarded to local contractors due to several factors ranging from inadequate finance, lack of technical expertise, and corruption to conflicting attitudes of multi-national operators and local contractors (Nwosu et al, 2006).

The rising conflict and ethnic militias that pervade the Niger Delta are eloquent testimonies to disappointment in the NDDC. This situation could be attributed to NDDC's seemingly intractable problems, such as financial limitations. An erstwhile NDDC Chairman noted that comprehensively developing the Niger Delta would require more than N400 billion (NDDC, 2004a) but as of October 2004, the NDDC had spent N80 billion. Also, some Niger Delta states queried the Federal Government on deduction from their allocations from the federation account while MOC have not been contributing the statutory 3 percent of their annual budget to the NDDC (Ojameruaye, 2004). Corruption remains another problem, as suggested by the fact that the leadership of the NDDC has been changed three times in less than six years, and "a recent allegation of corruption that led to the indefinite suspension of Mr. Godwin Omene, the Managing Director of NDDC, is very much a reenactment of history" (Jike, 2005:159). In the light of the foregoing, the problems that confronted present development policies are currently confronting the NDDC. Therefore, a re-engineering of the NDDC policy framework would be necessary.

A pellucid description of the NDDC problems shown in the above submission is extended further in this present paper, which makes a case for re-engineering the NDDC's Master Plan for development of the Niger Delta.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the NDDC package appears comprehensive it seems incapable of providing the desires of the Niger Delta communities. The NDDC, despite its seemingly good intentions, has not solved the issues on target. The Master Plan approaches are still falling short, especially as the intensity and complexity of violence has grown. The persistent volatile conflicts seem to demand new models and new ways of thinking to crack them. Solving the problems of the Niger Delta is not just a matter of mobilizing more funds for NDDC but also developing entirely new models and ways of achieving sustainable development.

This reality makes social reconciliation approaches that would achieve better leverage on resources, enhance effectiveness through collective negotiations, and enable more sustainable social impact increasingly relevant. The unfortunate gaps between the Niger Delta communities and their heritage have not been bridged as people continue to confront chronic deprivation arising from anti-community

policies, such as sections 34 and 36 of the Land Use Act of 1978. In protesting against the Nigerian state imposition of people unfriendly policies, organised bodies of militia groups have found violence a handy weapon and resisted human rights violation in their communities.

The modalities for addressing the relatively long history of activism on the Niger Delta issues seem to be missing in the NDDC master plan. As the continuing implementation of the master plan has not significantly improved the living standards of majority and pacified the aggrieved militant agencies, it is necessary to reexamine the commission's relevance within the context of the community development discourse. The operations of NDDC cannot elude the questions of alienation and communal catastrophe, escalating from the ambivalence of its hegemonic influence and authoritarian construct. The need to reengineer the Master Plan in the institutional frameworks aimed at repositioning the Niger Delta for sustainable development is inevitable.

Such re-engineering must lend credence to the necessity of collective reconciliatory movement that is capable of addressing the collective needs and providing lee-ways towards achieving them. The contradictory situations in the Niger Delta require a holistic approach. Instead of the budding bureaucrats, parochial politicians, profligate professionals, and local elites only dictating the pace for the rest of the Niger Delta communities, the multi-layered spheres of influences and powers of all agencies should be captured and engaged within the contexts of local idioms and communal development.

The importance of culturally nuanced strategy for the development of the Niger Delta should not be underrated. This study considers the inevitability of greater indigenous inputs towards successful implementation of the NDDC Master Plan. The Niger Delta people, especially the less privileged that are in the majority rather than only the elites who constitute the minority, must be actively involved in programmes that affect them. Community based organizations (CBOs) that represent the interest of the poor should be co-opted to stand in for people who may be too weak to play an active role. All members driven collective community interests must be at the centre of all projects implementations. This will require rigorous survey and social mapping of the programs' impact assessment and evaluation development policies.

In line with the recent recommendations by Dafinone (2007), a Niger Delta Bank for Reconstruction and Development and a Development Board should be incorporated. The operators of Oil and Gas business in Niger Delta, the traditional owners of land, and the people of the Niger Delta as defined by the Willink Report of 1958 should collectively negotiate and decide the membership of the Development Board whose funding should be from royalties due from the various operators of Oil and Gas in the Niger Delta. The above recommendations (re-engineering process) are crucial if equity and tranquility are desired in this resource rich region- the Niger Delta, which would help in reversing the resource curse paradox.

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