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Community Hindrances to Developmental Effort of Government in rural communities of Ilaje Local Government area, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The situation in the Niger Delta has been described to be a case of a herder feeding the rest of the flocks from milk of one animal while the animal itself grows thin unattended to. Developmental efforts in this region intended to compensate for the loss suffered as a result of oil exploitation activities have not been as effective as expected. Several factors have been pointed out to be responsible for this situation. The study uses a qualitative method to conduct findings into the role community inhabitants play in hindering the success of intervention efforts of government in the Niger Delta using the oil producing communities of Ondo state as a case study. The study uses primary data obtained from selected communities in the region. Primary data was obtained from structured questionnaire, interviews and phone calls. Findings revealed the major hindrance reported by community respondents (48.55%), NDDC staff (100%) and OSOPADEC staff (100%) as demand for gratification from project operatives. Other hindrances included kidnapping, land issues, vandalism, stealing of materials and agitations/ violent protests. Recommendations were made by all the respondents. These were community involvement in project planning, intensification of skill acquisition training, Regular payment of bursary funds for students, equity in sharing of compensation from government and oil companies, involving the community youths during project implementation. Others included transparency in selection of participants for skill acquisition, awarding contracts to indigenous contractors, compensating land owners appropriately, creating awareness on the negative effect of actions of communities that serves as hindrances and involving community in maintenance and monitoring projects

Introduction

The Niger Delta region occupies 7.5% of the entire land area of Nigeria. This region is the outlet of the Niger River sitting directly on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Nigeria. It is located within nine coastal southern Nigerian states of Edo, Imo, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Cross River, Delta and Ondo State. Of all the states that the region covers, only Cross River is not an oil-producing state (Duru, 1999; Vosad, 1999). The area consists of farmers and fishermen who are typically subsistence farmers. The communities are surrounded by water in the creeks where the fishermen carry out their fishing activities (Ajugwo, 2013).

The Ondo state oil producing communities are located along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The area boasts of over 180km long shoreline thereby making it the longest coastline in Nigeria. Oil exploration and production began here in the 1960s. It was then initiated by Gulf Oil Company. However, construction began in the area in 1977. The initial locations of the exploration exercise here were Awoye, Ojumole, Odofado, Molutehin and Oba-nla. By 2005, there were six Oil companies exploring at the region. These were Chevron-Texaco Nigeria Limited, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Cronicle, Express Oil, Consolidated Oil and Allied Energy.

The oil producing areas of the region was neglected after the farmsteads were displaced. The environment was devastated as a result of oil exploration and exploitation which led to the dislocation of people's productive bases. The oil region according to Ikein (1990) suffer more from the impact of oil due to existing economic and social problems. This was made worst by the activities of the oil industries. The near absence of basic amenities in communities in this region as a result of the neglect has resulted to worsened socioeconomic situation of the inhabitants. Even when they manage to get surplus of farm products to sell, they had no accessible roads for adequate marketing of the produce (Ajugwo, 2013). In the quest to solve the lingering developmental problems in the Niger Delta region The Nigerian government established intervention agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to plan and implement the programmes needed for the development of the Niger Delta Region (Babajide, 2004). This agency was established for economic empowerment. The mandate of the commission include the formulation of policies and guidelines for the development of the region, Conception, planning and implementation, in accordance with set rules and regulations, of projects and programmes for sustainable development of the Niger Delta area in the field of transportation including roads, jetties and waterways, health, employment, industrialization, agriculture and fisheries, housing and urban development, water supply, electricity and telecommunications.

The State government of Ondo with a vision to ease the development efforts in the region created the Ondo State Oil Producing Area Commission (OSOPADEC) to cater specifically for the people of the oil producing communities by providing basic infrastructure, projects and other activities that could alleviate the suffering of the people. The two local government that benefited from the creation of OSOPADEC are Ilaje Local Government and Ese-Odo Local government area as they are the only two oil producing local governments in the state.

OSOPADEC was created to achieve sustainable development of the oil producing areas of Ondo State through the receipt and exclusive administration of the 40% of the 13% oil derivation fund accruing to the Ondo State Government. The administrative structure of the Commission afford an indigene of the oil producing areas to be appointed as its full-time Executive Chairman, which created a lot of goodwill from the people.

The functions of the commission are to receive and administer exclusively, 40% of the 13% oil derivation fund accruing to Ondo State Government for the rehabilitation and development of oil producing areas in the state and other development projects as may be determined from time to time by the Commission; to liaise with the relevant Federal Government and State Government authorities on the control and effective methods of tackling the problems of coastal erosion, oil pollution and spillages in the State; to ensure fair and equitable distribution of development projects in the oil producing areas of the State.

Despite the huge amount budgeted and allocated yearly by both the Federal Government of Nigeria and Ondo State government, these interventionist agencies have not been able to perform the expected miracle over the years of establishment. This assertion has in reality threatened the relevance of the Agencies and there have been suggestions for reorganizing and redefining their missions and visions as to reposition them to be more impactful. The reason for the underperformance of the agency has in several researches been linked to several inhibitory factors among which is hindrances from the community inhabitants. Osaghae (2007) highlighted conflicts between the communities and government as major factor impeding the success of government in the Niger Delta region. Isidiho and Mohammed (2015) contributed that the sociocultural structure and problems of the region in itself has adversely affected the performance of intervention projects and vice versa.

Community Hindrances

Community hindrances are those activities of community inhabitants that militate against the smooth running of a developmental effort ultimately impeding or retarding the success. These happens in different ways, an act can threaten the security of project executors, and others can destroy already implemented projects. All these acts eventually hinder the success of an intervention effort resulting in the non-realisation of the mission and vision for its conception. Community hindrances can arise for different reasons but in general, they are as a result of quest for resource control. Inhabitants of these communities believe that they own the oil resource which according to reports generate about 70% of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and as such should be duly compensated.

They claim that the government has diverted the so called 'oil money' to the cities while they remained uncared for therefore every opportunity they have to get what they can from the government, they take it either from project executors during implementation or from implemented projects.

Forms of community hindrances in the Niger Delta Region

Kidnapping

Kidnapping can be seen as false imprisonment in the sense that it involves the illegal confinement of individuals against his or her own will by another individual in such a way as to violate the confined individual's right to be free from the restraint of movement. This involves taking away of person against the person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment or confinement without legal authority. This is often done for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. No one is free from being kidnapped. In Nigeria, the kidnapers are everywhere targeting both foreigners and non-foreigners alike with little or no resistance from our law enforcement agents.

Nigerian security system has been weakened in the face of this confrontation, a little has been done to find the socio-economic and underlining factors precipitating this crime.

As kidnapping was first used as a weapon to fight for economic and environmental justice in the Niger Delta, the economic motivation was intermittently used as a means to fund and sustain the fight. The beginning of 2007 saw the emergence of various other deviant groups by various names that hide under liberation struggle to commit economic crimes.

The oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria has seen an explosion in the number of foreigners kidnapped for financial or political gain. Seven foreigners were reported kidnapped in Nigeria in 2005. That figure increased to 72 in 2006 and 223 in 2007. This exponential increase has been largely the result of activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other armed militant groups. 26 of the hostages were UK nationals. Of the 295 foreigners kidnapped in 2006 and 2007, five died as a result of injuries sustained during their abduction. The effect of kidnapping on development is enormously inhibitory. The level of development in the Niger Delta Region have in a lot of ways retarded socio economic development. No doubt, the menace and impact of kidnapping have created a faulty labour market in Nigeria. So, the impact of the menace began to emerge and businesses in the country began a journey down the abyss of economic decline. Hence, while the kidnapper ravaged the region, business and investors' confidence becomes casualties, and the people suffered. Other connotations associated with these menace are as follows;

1. **Destabilisation of Labour Market:** The exit of firms and organisations in these areas dominated by kidnapping tantamount to sending thousands of workers back to the labour market thereby worsening unemployment situation.
2. **Workplace insecurity:** Wogu (2010), the then Minister of Labour, cited in Umejei (2010) appeared to read the mind of workers, when he gave assurances that workers should go about their duties without fear, but labour movement differs as it expressed fears that except government takes pro-active steps, the effect on productivity could be enormous. Such actions negatively affect the productivity of workers as it raises fear concerning the working place. Also, workers could mean contractors executing a government intervention projects or even government agencies workers on a project start up plan visit to the community.

Militancy: The militant uprising in the Niger Delta which has been simmering for years has assumed a dangerous dimension as regards the Nigerian economy. That is, the daily buffet of violence served by militants to protest the lack of development and marginalization in the region has serious economic implications for the nation. For instance, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) almost succeeded with its threats to cripple the Nigerian oil industry (IRIN, 2006). The Nigerian economy has a high level of dependence on oil. It is worthy to note that, the Nigerian nation is sustained majorly by proceeds from the exportation of oil and gas, produced in the Niger Delta. However, the advent and proliferation of militant groups and the sophisticated nature of their attacks have made the Nigerian economy vulnerable to such attacks. For instance, the Nigerian nation was taken aback, when in June 2008, the militants were able to move into the deep-sea-operation area to attack Nigeria's largest offshore oil platform, the Bonga Oil Platform, which lies 120 kilometers off the coast of the country. That operation almost grounded oil business in Nigeria and made the country to cede her position as the foremost oil exporter in Africa to Angola (Punch, 2009). The Bonga oil platform produces 225,000 barrels of crude oil per day on its computerized, production, storage and off-loading platform (Mbah, 2008).

The Atlas Clove oil facility attack in Lagos by militants in 2009, equally demonstrated the capability of militants to wreak havoc on the Nigerian economy. Several other attacks have been carried out by militants on oil facilities at various times all of these attacks have high impact on the Nation's economy and also frustrating developmental efforts of the government in the Niger Delta.

Agitations/ violent protests: This act is very common in the oil producing communities of Ondo State. Members of the populations who cannot mastermind attacks on oil facilities like the militants, constantly take to the street to protest against the perceived neglect of the communities in by the government. A lot of times these protest are veered towards these government agencies mandated to bring about development in the region. The popular believe is that these agencies are the 'store house' of the oil money which supposedly belongs to everyone. The complaints have always been that the workers in this agencies live extravagant lives with money gotten through corrupt means from government funds meant for the development of the region. Most times these protests turn violent resulting to agencies' offices being locked up for days while employees fled for dear lives.

Methodology

The study area is the oil producing communities of Ondo State. The major oil producing local government is Ilaje Local Government Area. Ilaje LGA shares boundaries with Okitipupa Local Government Area in the north; the Atlantic Ocean in the south; Ijebu Waterside Local Government Area (in Ogun State) in the west and Delta state in the east. The area boasts of over 180km long shoreline thereby making it the longest coastline in Nigeria. The study area falls within latitudes 6° and 6° 30' north of the equator and longitudes 4° 45' and 5° 45' east of the Greenwich Meridian. The area is positioned within the equatorial evergreen swamp forest. Ilaje local government is made up of three major Kingdoms which are Ugbo, Mahin and Etikan Kingdom. Ugbokigdom consists of the major oil producing communities.

For the purpose of this study, 4 communities in Ugbo kingdom were chosen, they include Ugbonla, Ode-Ugbo, Ayetoro and Awoye. They were selected based on their relevance in the kingdom and the local government, their population and the fact that restive activities of youths have been very serious in the area recently. Instruments used for the study include phone calls, interviews, and structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaire was designed and administered to 40 youths in each community giving a total of 160 youths. However, only 154 useable questionnaires were used for analysis. 8 members of staff each from NDDC and OSOPADEC were interviewed.

Percentages and frequencies were used to analyse collected data.

Results And Discussion

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

S/no	Variable	Class	Frequency	Percent
1	Age Group	15-24	23	14.8
		25-34	41	26.7
		35-44	38	24.8
		45-54	27	17.4
		55-64	13	8.5
		65 and above	12	7.9
		Total	154	100
2	Gender	Male	94	61.3
		Female	60	38.7
		Total	154	100.0%
3	Marital Status	Single	29	19.1
		Married	122	79.7
		Widowed	2	0.8
		Separated	1	0.3
		Total	154	100
5	Educational Attainment	None	24	16.1
		Primary	35	22.8
		Secondary	75	47.9
		Tertiary	20	13.2

		Total	154	100
7	Income	Low	121	78.5
		Medium	23	15
		High	10	6.5
		Total	154	100

Table 1 contains information about the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. From the table it is seen that 14.8% representing 23 respondents were aged 15-24, 26.7% representing 44 respondents were aged 25-34, 24.8% (38 respondents) were aged 35-44, 17.4% of respondents (27 respondents) were aged 45-54, 8.5% (13 respondents) were aged 55-64 while 7.9% (12 respondents) were aged 65 and above. Majority of the respondents (61.3% representing 381 respondents) were male while 38.7% representing 241 respondents were female. Most of the respondents (79.7%) were married, 19.1% single, 0.8% widowed and 0.3% were separated. Majority of the respondents (47.9%) had secondary school education, 22.8% had primary school education, 16.1% had No education while the least percentage (13.2%) had tertiary education. This indicates that majority of the respondents have secondary level education. Jimoh and Olorunfemi, (2014) also obtained a similar result in their research on ‘two sides of development: projects and conflicts in oil producing area of Ondo State’ Majority (71.5%) of the respondents’ occupation was farming and it is mainly fishing, 6.4% were civil servants, 4.2% were into manufacturing, 1.3% worked in financial institutions, 1.4% worked with construction companies, and 15.1% had other forms of business which includes tailoring, hairdressing, trading, welding, basket weaving and engine parts repair.

The income per month of the respondents were grouped into low income earners (N1000-N30, 000), medium (N30, 001-N60, 000) and high (N60, 001 and above). This grouping is based on the purchasing power of money in the study area. Most (78.5%) of the respondents were low income earners, 15% were medium income earners while 6.5% earned high. The income situation in the communities is low considering the economic situation of the country.

Community hindrances to intervention efforts

Community respondents: Table 2 shows the result obtained when community respondents were asked to list the hindrances they perceived militates the success of intervention projects in the communities.

Table 2 Perceived hindrances from community respondents

s/n	perceived hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
1	Demand for gratifications from Project Operatives	75	48.55
2	Kidnapping	11	7.23
3	Agitations/violent protests	50	32.31
4	Stealing of materials	25	16.40
6	Vandalisation	37	23.96

From table 3, 48.55% of community respondents mentioned demand for gratifications as a major hindrance, followed by youth restiveness (32.31%) and the least is kidnapping (7.23%), the rate of kidnapping is relatively low when compared to other Niger Delta regions probably because most of the big oil companies are not located in communities in the study area. Vandalisation and stealing of materials were also highlighted by 23.96% and 16.40% of the participants respectively.

The common hindrance is “demand for gratification by the community members from project executors”. A community leader interviewed highlighted that: *This always happens when people notice a new project sited in their community, they meet the people implementing the project and demand for gratification in form of money from them and will do anything to make sure they are given. They even go as far as forcing contractors to abandon the project if they are not paid.* Demand for gratification was also reported by Ibeanu, (2000) in his study on Oiling the Friction: Environmental Conflict Management in the Niger Delta.

NDDC staff respondents: Table 3 shows the result obtained when NDDC staff respondents were asked to list the hindrances they perceived militates the success of intervention projects in the communities.

Table 3 Perceived hindrances from NDDC staff respondents

s/n	Perceived hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Youth Disturbance/Violent protests	7	87.5
2.	Kidnapping	4	50.0
3.	Demand for gratification	8	100.0
4.	Land issue.	6	75.0
5.	Vandalization of projects	7	87.5
6.	incompletion of skill acquisition	8	100.0

Hindrances listed by the NDDC staff are shown in table 4.17. A look at the hindrances reported by NDDC staff are similar to the ones reported by the community respondents. The few changes are the listing of land issues (15.0%) and non-completion of skill acquisition (20.0%) as one of the hindrances. Land issues are also related to the demand for gratification. Land issues always arise when the location for a new project is being sought for. Community will always want to collect money before releasing their land, many at times the amount demanded for is too huge for the programme executors to give and when they manage to meet their demand, they run into shortage of funds resulting to inability to deliver the specified scope for the project. This view was captured by an NDDC project staff member interviewed. In his words he said that:

“For instance, when a contract of 12 million naira is awarded and the community is demanding for 2 million naira for land with other demand for gratifications still on another side, it will be very difficult for the executors to deliver the quality specified. Most times, the contractors give in to their request and deliver what the rest can afford and some contractors implement to a certain stage the remaining contract sum can carry then abandon the project”

The situations have led to the non-completion of many projects and many completed ones were executed inappropriately. All the project staff members interviewed (100%) highlighted non-completion of skill acquisition by participants as a major challenge facing the success of NDDC intervention programme especially in the area of skill acquisition. This was mentioned specifically by the staff member in charge of NDDC skill acquisition programmes in Ilaje Local Government when interviewed who said that:

Most of the selected participants especially from the core oil producing communities only collect the money and materials then go away with it. They do not complete the programme as they see the money as their own share of the money generated by government from their region.

Other hindrances listed included kidnapping (50%), vandalizaion of projects (87.5%) and agitations/violent protests (87.5%).

OSOPADEC staff respondents: Table 4 shows the result obtained when OSOPADEC staff respondents were asked to list the hindrances they perceived militates the success of intervention projects in the communities.

Table 4 Perceived Hindrances from OSOPADEC staff respondents

s/n	Perceived hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Youth Disturbance/Violent protests	6	75.0
2.	Kidnapping	2	25.0
3.	Demand for gratification	8	100.0
4.	Land issue	6	75.0
5.	Vandalization of projects	8	87.5
6.	incompletion of skill acquisition	8	100.0

Table 5 revealed that the hindrances reported by OSOPADEC staff members are similar to that reported by NDDC staff members. Six staff members (75%) reported youth disturbances/violent protest, 25% reported kidnapping, 100% reported demand for gratification and 75% reported land issue as a hindrance. Furthermore, 87.5% of the respondents reported vandalisation of projects while all of the respondents (100%) reported incompletion of skill acquisition programmes.

Recommendations for tackling hindrances

The respondents were asked to make recommendations on how they think hindrances can be tackled

Recommendations from community participants: The following recommendations were made by the community participants

Table 6 Recommendations from community respondents

s/ n	Recommendations	frequency	Percentage
1	Community involvement in project planning	137	88.96
2	Intensification of skill acquisition training	63	40.91
3	Regular payment of bursary funds for students	52	33.77
4	Equity in sharing of compensation from government and oil companies	21	13.64
5	Involving the community youths during project implementation	72	46.75
6	Transparency in selection of participants for skill acquisition	65	42.21
7	Awarding contracts to indigenous contractors	14	9.10
8	Compensating land owners appropriately	47	30.52
9	Creating awareness on the negative effect of actions of communities that serves as hindrances	82	53.25
10	Involving community in maintenance and monitoring projects	74	48.05

From table 6, it was observed that 88.96% representing 137 community respondents recommended community involvement in project planning, they argue that when community inhabitants are involved in project planning, the right project is implemented taking into consideration all environmental issues including vandals and thieves. Also community developments an ownership inclination of reasoning towards the project and therefore will guide the process and safeguard the project. 40.91% recommended intensification of skill acquisition training as a solution to hindrances. They argue that when youths are trained on skills, they have something doing and they desists from participating in antisocial activities. Others argue that poverty and joblessness is responsible for most of the activities, intensifying skill acquisition efforts will therefore see most of this activities diminish. 33.77% recommended regular payment of students' bursary funds, 13.64% recommended equity in sharing of compensation from government and oil companies. Also 46.75% recommended involving the community youths during project implementation, 42.21% recommended transparency in selection of participants for skill acquisition, 9.10% of the community respondents recommended awarding contracts to indigenous contractors. Moreover, 30.52% recommended compensating land owners appropriately, 53.25% recommended creating awareness on the negative effect of actions of communities that serves as hindrances, while 48.05% recommended Involving community in maintenance and monitoring of projects as a way of tackling hindrances.

Recommendations from NDDC staff respondents: The following recommendations were made by the NDDC staff respondents

Table 7 Recommendations from community respondents

s/ n	Recommendations	frequency	Percentage
1	Community involvement in project planning	8	100
2	Intensification of skill acquisition training efforts	8	100
3	Providing adequate security for project executors	5	62.5
4	Transparency in selection of participants for skill acquisition	6	75
5	Budgeting for enough funds to compensate land owners	4	50
6	Involving community in monitoring and providing security for projects	7	87.5
7	Creating awareness on the negative effect of actions of communities that serves as hindrances	8	100

A look at the recommendations by NDDC staff respondents in table 7, shows a similarity with what was highlighted by the community respondents. A little discrepancies however existed noticeably the inclusion of provision of adequate security for project executors (62.5%), budgeting for enough funds to compensate land owners (50%) and involving community in monitoring and providing security for projects (87.5%).

Recommendations from OSOPADEC staff respondents: The following recommendations were made by the OSOPADEC staff respondents.

Table 8 Recommendations from OSOPADEC staff respondents

s/n	Recommendations	frequency	Percentage
1	Community involvement in project planning	8	100
2	conducting town hall meetings	2	25
3	Intensification of skill acquisition training efforts	7	100
4	Providing adequate security for project executors	3	37.5
5	Budgeting for enough funds to compensate land owners	4	50
6	Involving community in monitoring and providing security for projects	7	87.5
7	Creating awareness on the negative effect of actions of communities that serves as hindrances	8	100

Table 8 revealed the recommendations made by OSOPADEC staff respondents. The recommendations are also similar to what was reported by NDDC staff respondents. Inclusion of conduct of town hall meetings (25%) and exclusion of transparency in selection of participants for skill acquisition however gave a noticeable difference.

Conclusion

No doubt the country has made efforts to ensure wall around development the Niger Delta region. But like an said in “Public Relations for Maximum Productivity” that “no matter the level of international diplomacy and brinkmanship we employ, if we do not work conscientiously to rid our country of negative tendencies that abound here and show our determination to build a new foundation for collective development and progress, Nigerians will be wasting their time and money because the international community will not take us seriously.” Genuine investors now shy away from venturing into the Nigerian business environment that is already enmeshed in dearth of infrastructure, epileptic power supply, high cost of finance and unfavourable political climate. For example the spate of kidnaping in the Niger Delta has discouraged countless investors from the region. Security threat is no way helping the situation of development in the Niger Delta. To make government intervention successful in this region, deliberate efforts have to be made to tackle the hindrances outlined in this study else government investments will keep proving ineffective. Community hindrances may not be the only challenge facing government interventions in the region, but it is a major part of it. Dealing with community hindrances will definitely increases the success rate of government interventions in the region.

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